

A HISTORY OF WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS

A History of Women Philosophers

1. Ancient Women Philosophers, 600 B.C.–500 A.D.
2. Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment Women Philosophers, 500–1600
3. Modern Women Philosophers, 1600–1900
4. Contemporary Women Philosophers, 1900–today

A History of Women Philosophers

Volume II

Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment

Women Philosophers

A.D. 500–1600

Edited by

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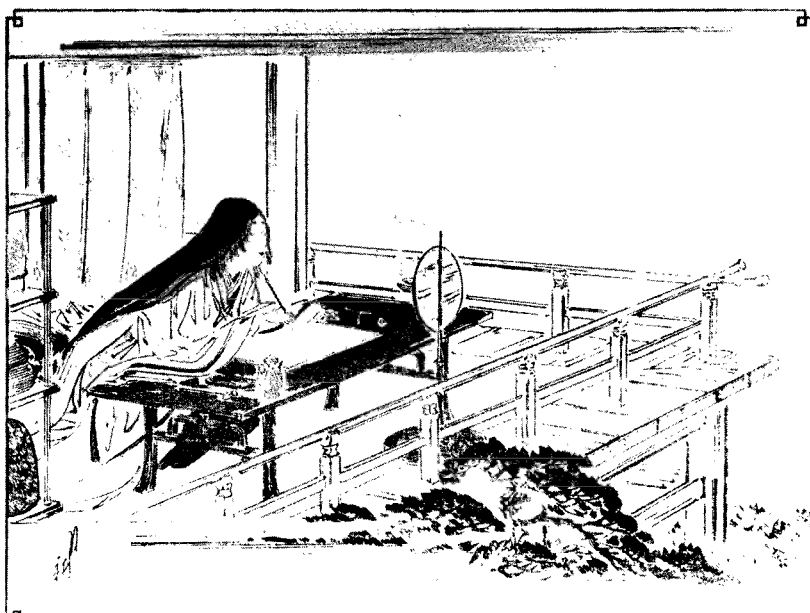
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MURASAKI SHIKIBU
970–1031

by unknown artist

CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS AND THEIR MALE CONTEMPORARIES

500	600	700	800	900	1000	1100
				ROSWITHA OF GANDERSHEIM		HILDEGARD OF BINGEN
						HERRAD OF HOHENBOURG
				MURASAKI SHIKIBU		
						HELOISE
	John of Damascius	Johannes Scotus Eriugena		Ibn Sina	Anselm of Canterbury	Pierre Abelard

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE COUNTER REFORMATION

1200	1300	1400	1500	1600
BEATRICE OF NAZARETH	BIRGITTA OF SWEDEN	MARGUERITE OF NAVARRE	OLIVA SABUCO DE NANTES BARRERA	
MECHTILD OF MAGDEBURG	JULIAN OF NORWICH	MARGARET MORE ROPER		
HADEWYCH OF ANTWERP		TERESA OF AVILA		
	CATHERINE OF SIENA			MARIE LE JARS DE GOURNAY
	CHRISTINE PISAN			
Thomas Aquinas	Duns Scotus	Nicolas of Cusa	Desiderus Erasmus	Michel de Montaigne

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documents could prove a rich source of information about women engaged in philosophy during this period. Professor Burham Terrell imparted useful information about the sources, transmission and illumination of texts, and made several valuable suggestions regarding the inclusion of some of the German mystics.

Many members of the Project on the History of Women in Philosophy made substantial contributions to chapters in this volume which they did not author. I had not intended to include Heloise in this volume at all. Like others, I too “knew” she was only a student of Abelard’s. Project member Wolfgang Gombocz urged me to include her and undertook much of the research himself, sending me annotated copies of commentary literature unavailable in the United States and putting me in touch with an expert on Heloise, Professor Peter Dronke of Cambridge. Finally, I could resist Heloise no longer. It is entirely due to Professor Gombocz’ efforts that she appears in this volume. Early in the development of the research for this volume, another Project member, Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M. graciously shared her own research materials and made useful contributions to the bibliography of sources which are also included in her groundbreaking work *The Concept of Woman* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1985). Project member Ayako Taneda provided several pages of information about Murasaki Shikibu, the only non-western woman philosopher discussed here. Professor Taneda had originally hoped to take a more active role in completing the research and writing of the Murasaki chapter, but conflicting professional duties prevented her from collaborating further in that undertaking. Her description of Murasaki’s importance convinced me to offer an introduction to the thought of that philosopher here and I have incorporated many of her insights into the text of that chapter. Beatrice Zedler was the first to suggest to me the name Herrad of Hohenbourg for inclusion in the Project’s research list. Although she was not able to undertake the Herrad research herself, Professor Zedler kindly provided me with excerpts of some intriguing, if surprising, contemporary news coverage of that 12th century philosopher!

I owe a debt of gratitude to Judy Maier Voshell who contributed many hours to the task of copy-editing early versions of chapters on Catharine of Siena, Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera, and Birgitta of Sweden. I also wish to thank my husband Lloyd S. Waithe whose

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My deepest appreciation to all who have helped bring this volume to completion.

MARY ELLEN WAITHE

Introduction to Volume II

JOAN GIBSON and MARY ELLEN WAITHE

If we trace the history of philosophy from the feudal period to the counter-reformation, we see that the minds of women and men alike were engaged in exploration, analysis and debate of some of the most fundamental philosophical questions of their time. Those questions concerned three important and related spheres of knowledge: the scientific, the political, and, the religious. The names of some who asked those questions, as well as the writings in which those questions were explored are well known to historians of philosophy. Names like Abelard, Bruno, Nicolas of Cusa, Hugh of St. Victor, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Copernicus, Erasmus, Bacon, Montaigne and others are familiar. Most philosophers can describe the contributions these great minds made to philosophical knowledge.

Names like Heloise, Hildegard of Bingen, and Catherine of Siena also sometimes appear among the names of philosophers of their era, yet teachers and students of philosophy are at a loss to describe the contributions these philosophers made to knowledge. Other names, like Murasaki Shikibu, Herrad of Hohenbourg, Beatrice of Nazareth, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Hadewych of Antwerp, Birgitta of Sweden, Christine of Pisan, Julian of Norwich, Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera, and Marie le Jars de Gournay are not even recognized. Yet, these and other women philosophers of the period made valuable contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of religion and philosophy of medicine. Those contributions are the subject of this volume.

In the long dawning of the middle ages, the intellectual concerns of men and women were seldom as prominent as political and military considerations. For women of spiritual or intellectual

aspirations, the rise of western monasticism was the most noteworthy event of the early centuries. The importance of monasteries cannot be overstressed as sources of spirituality, learning and autonomy in the intensely masculinized, militarized feudal period. Drawing their members from the highest levels of society, women's monasteries provided an outlet for the energy and ambition of strong-willed women, as well as positions of considerable authority. Even from periods relatively inhospitable to learning of all kinds, the memory has been preserved of a good number of women of education. Their often considerable achievements and influence, however, generally lie outside even an expanded definition of philosophy.

Among the most notable foremothers of this early period were several whose efforts signal the possibility of later philosophical work. Radegund, in the sixth century, established one of the first Frankish convents, thereby laying the foundations for women's spiritual and intellectual development. From these beginnings, women's monasteries increased rapidly in both number and influence both on the continent and in Anglo-Saxon England. Hilda (d. 680) is well known as the powerful abbess of the double monastery of Whitby. She was eager for knowledge, and five English bishops were educated under her tutelage. She is also accounted the patron of Caedmon, the first Anglo-Saxon poet of religious verse. The Anglo-Saxon nun Lioba was versed in the liberal arts as well as Scripture and canon law. In the mid-eighth century, she joined the monk Boniface in his mission to christianize the Germanic lands, founding convents. She was herself famed as a teacher, and her pupils were sought after as teachers. Dhoua, a lay woman, writing in the southern part of the Frankish kingdom after 840, composed a Latin epistle of instruction for her son in which she offers religious and secular advice on the conduct of life at court. Early in the next century, Hrotsvith (d. 927), (not to be confused with her namesake, Roswitha of Gandersheim, *circa* 935) abbess of Gandersheim, is said to have written works on logic and rhetoric.

Although convents were always the most likely source of education for western European women, even for lay women, there must also always have been some private instruction. The children of Charlemagne's palace, both boys and girls, had been taught by renowned tutors, including Alcuin. Interest in the liberal arts and

philosophy was high and it was reported that Charles' daughter Gisela (fl. 750) studied the stars. There is no evidence that women participated in the revival of philosophic and greek studies which occurred during the reign of his grandson, Charles the Bald, who was a patron of the Irish monks, including the philosopher John Scotus Eriugena.

And while convent education as well as private tutelage contributed to the education of some European women, where formal education of oriental women occurred at all, it remained the essentially private instruction of children of the aristocracy. Murasaki Shikibu lived at the height of the Heian dynasty in Japan. Buddhist monasteries were centers of Japanese philosophic and religious studies; provincial and imperial courts were centers of literary studies. And although there were many nuns, all women were excluded from the study of Chinese writing. In consequence, poetry contests and other highly-valued opportunities for literary creativity and expression were foreclosed to women. Women under Japanese monasticism seldom studied the *sutras* or had access to written Chinese philosophy. For older women, Japanese monastic life could provide refuge from the vicissitudes of poverty and widowhood. But it was not the educational resource for younger women that European monasteries were. Like other educated Japanese women of that period, Murasaki Shikibu learned at home. But (perhaps) unlike others, she secretly learned Chinese. This would have enabled her to read philosophy, but whether the opportunity to do so would have arisen is less clear.

Throughout the period of the middle ages and renaissance the trivium – the arts of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric – formed the basis of all european education at both the elementary and more advanced levels. Changes in education during this time can be roughly correlated to changes in emphasis within the trivium. Monastic education was characterized by a grammatical approach, entailing at minimum learning sufficient Latin to read and meditate on Scripture and to participate in the liturgy. As well, all study of literature, literary theory or exegesis was included in a grammatical education. As a result, monastic authors were often steeped in the surviving pagan texts and commentaries of the classical period, as well as in Biblical and patristic sources. Pagan texts were harmonized with Christian teaching through allegorical interpretation,

and all reading was placed in the context of meditative prayer. Augustinian neo-platonism, which formed a staple of monastic interpretation, supplied the underlying warrant and the philosophical direction. The monastery itself was thought of as a school designed for the service of God in which the religious strove to attain the true way of life by instruction and communal practice. To 'philosophize' was to know the true value of things and follow after the highest. Philosophy thus led toward contemplation of God through a refinement of inner vision; it was the life of wisdom, lived according to reason. It was a life which engendered virtue and subdued vice. Although foundations for men were generally larger, richer, and offered better educational opportunities than those for women, the monastic environment for men and women was roughly comparable. Significant divergences began to appear in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The reasons are varied and complex, but two changes in educational and religious patterns are especially noteworthy: the professionalization of the clergy, and, the emergence of new religious orders.

In the first, changes in twelfth century society reflected an increasingly urban setting, and an increased professionalization. In the religious sphere, a new emphasis on the priesthood was accompanied by a desire for a better educated clergy; at the same time, secular and ecclesiastical courts required ever more numerous and more highly trained assistants. As the rising universities came to serve these needs, the most exciting educational developments took place there rather than in monasteries. The intellectual ferment of the arts curriculum resulted from its focus on dialectic, which became even more pronounced after the recovery of the full Aristotelian logic. Moreover, the development of systematic theology stimulated intense philosophic activity in the higher theological faculty.

But far more than the curriculum changed. Scholastic teaching methods included not only the literal commentary, but also the question commentary, formalized logical exercises on trivial topics, and the sometimes rowdy disputations. These were as antithetical to monastic sensibilities as were scholastic attempts to render philosophy and theology scientific and abstract. For these reasons, the educational programme of the universities generally had relatively little appeal for the monastic orders or for many religious com-

munities of women under monastic rules. And it is not surprising that an educational system which was urban, impersonal, clerical, professional and adversarial did not willingly admit women. However, especially in the later period, a few exceptional women can be found in southern universities which were dominated by the secular faculties of law, medicine or notarial studies rather than by theology as at Paris and Oxford. For example, among its female academicians fifteenth century Italy produced Novella d'Andrea, the legal scholar; Dorotea Bucca, who held a chair in philosophy at Bologna; Baptista Malatesta, a philosopher and theologian, and Vittoria Colonna, a humanist. But, it is very unclear how much access women of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries may have had to the new university learning through tutors or spiritual directors who were often university trained friars.

The second major point of divergence between the experience of men and women occurred with the development of important new religious orders in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The most active and fervent religious movements of that period were Cistercian monastic reform and the beginnings of non-monastic orders, including the Dominican and Franciscan. But the relations of women to these movements were complex and troubled. Each group at some times, and in different ways, sought to divest themselves of responsibility for the direction of women and to forbid or repudiate foundations of women under their rule, and nearly all religious orders imposed stricter enclosure for women in this period. Women were thus largely excluded from a formal role in both the religious revival toward greater asceticism and the revival moving toward greater worldly involvement through ministering, preaching, converting or combatting heresy.

At Disibodenberg, the 400 year old Benedictine Abbey admitted Hildegard of Bingen among its first community of women. Here, Hildegard and others learned scripture, music, and Latin. But Disibodenberg was not the only place in Europe where young girls of royal or aristocratic (or at least well-off) families could receive an arts education, or, could be dowered to spend their lives in devotion, learning, contemplation, and service. There were convent schools like Argenteuil where Heloise learned Latin, Hebrew, Greek, rhetoric, philosophy and classical literature. So well did she learn there that by the time she was sixteen she was, on Abelard's

account, reputed to have the greatest knowledge of literature of anyone in all of France. There were double monasteries in France, in the Low Countries, in Italy, England as well as in Germany. Some, like Gandersheim, coined their own currency. Others, like Whitby in Northumbria, grew famous as educational centers for both men and women. Hohenbourg, in Alsasce, was home to Herrad of Hohenbourg, compiler of the *Hortus Deliciarum*. Helfta, in Saxony was a center not only of manuscript preservation and miniaturization, but of writing, where Gertrude of Hackeborn (1251–1291) was noted for her zealous education of the nuns in the arts. She is reputed to have developed what was, for a convent, a substantial library. Helfta produced four great learned women, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Mechtild of Hackeborn, Gertrude the Great, and Gertrude of Hackeborn.

Lay people, especially women, took the initiative in developing new non-institutional forms of religious expression. From the twelfth century, pious groups proliferated, which sought to embrace a life in accord with the gospel. Some such groups, however, were on the fringes of orthodoxy, and concern about their heretical tendencies led authorities to seek stronger spiritual supervision of the ardent recluses and the women who undertook lives of service in towns, either singly or in community. These latter, the beguines, did not make permanent vows to religious life; they retained the option of leaving the beguinages, and they did not renounce the right to private property. They worked to support themselves, although many, especially at first, were drawn from the wealthy bourgeoisie. Some beguines provided instruction to children of the town. Contact between the women mystics, sometimes speaking only in their native languages, and scholastically-trained spiritual advisors seems to have been enormously fruitful. Although beguines were important throughout the European continent, the beguine movement took hold early and was especially strong in the Low Countries. There, as nowhere else, communities of beguines developed into entire quarters of large cities. Their courts can still be found in Bruges, Ghent and Amsterdam. Women of these beguinages studied religion and philosophy. Although beguinages in the Low Countries did not become significant centers of philosophy, they were major centers of learning for women. As such, they provided opportunities for literacy, for study, and for

philosophical and theological writing. Beatrice of Nazareth and Hadewych of Antwerp rank foremost among the philosopher be-guines of the Low Countries.

Less certain opportunities for literacy were available to women in the British Isles. Although double abbeys existed, libraries were typically housed in male abbeys. Nevertheless, women had access to philosophy, albeit, often filtered through the views of the males giving the sermons. Sometimes the environment itself was simply rich enough to afford even an illiterate woman access to the great ideas of philosophy. Such was the case in Norwich. For fourteenth-century Norwich boasted three houses of study: a Benedictine priory, a Franciscan *studia generalia* which was famous throughout the continent, and, one of the best libraries in the British Isles. The discussion of the great religious, political and philosophical issues of the time must have filled the air. And as an anchoress, Julian of Norwich would have been expected to study works of religion and philosophy.

From about 1300, the rediscovery and re-analysis of ancient texts provided the intellectual underpinnings for social changes which had intensified in the late medieval period. Renaissance movements are associated with the increasing importance of cities, of a monetary economy, and of political restructuring – fragmentation in Italy and Germany, centralization in France and England. Seeing themselves as the heirs to the classical cultures of Rome and Greece, men and women were fired to understand the intellectual and moral currents which had animated those cultures, and to reshape their own society by the application of those recovered ideas and values.

The universities responded less rapidly and less enthusiastically to these changes than did leading sectors in business, the military, government and church. The proponents of the new humanism worked for educational reform, especially at the earlier levels, and pursued more advanced study of the classics privately or through informal study societies. As the humanists were among the first to make serious educational use of the new technology of printing, at least theoretically, the fruits of their work became widely available to women and men alike. The Renaissance boasts many famous examples of learned women; stimulated by catalogues of famous women of antiquity, cities sometimes vied to claim contemporary women who might rival classical models. The attraction of the

learned women seems to have waned, however, as they grew older and were no longer viewed as prodigies. Examples of mature women, in particular married women, who were able to continue to study and to work as humanists are much more rare.

The increased prominence of highly educated lay women owes much to changes in education. The expansion of private education (including some well-known examples of co-education) together with lessening emphasis on the universities – regarded by humanists as irrelevant purveyors of sterile logic – may have lowered some of the barriers to the education of women. Daughters of less wealthy educated men now received an education without being dedicated to a life of religion, and educated girls were in a position to bring credit to their families through their accomplishments. But other aspects of Renaissance society and the humanist reform of education worked against the education of women. The decline of monasticism, and its eventual suppression in England, reduced the availability of a recognized place for a woman to pursue a lifetime of study, teaching, and writing, and diminished her chances of finding a status which made it possible for her to address society.

Curricular changes were also important. Education became again more grammatically based, because of its emphasis on the recovery and mastery of the pure language and literature of Greece and Rome. While many women excelled in this study, it was not enough. The humanist ideal was to put language in the service of persuasion, to change the hearts and minds of men and thus reinstitute a better society. Education was thus ultimately more practical, rhetorical and ethical. Philosophically, it allied itself with a renewed neo-platonism and a renewed emphasis on the active life. Philosophical questions were raised about the nature and function of law and governance, moral issues were usually set within a frame of public social action, and the scientific study of medicine was used to understand human nature.

But this educational shift presented several difficulties for women. The Renaissance had also introduced strict canons of decorum, under which it was highly inappropriate for women to speak on public matters. For a woman to hold authority over a man was considered a fundamental breach of natural order, and a woman's use of authority was so dangerous that for a woman even to teach girls was sometimes considered unsuitable. As a secular

woman addressing secular topics could no longer claim for herself the role of speaking for God, she had few sources of authority, and no acceptable forum for engaging in discussion or debate with male scholars. In the absence of a female community for discussing public issues, it became difficult for women to find either a voice or an audience. Recognising women's exclusion from debate over the public realm, educators generally recommended against allowing them training in either logic or rhetoric. Since much Renaissance philosophy is based on rhetorical traditions, this exclusion severely limited the scope of philosophy open to women. Their efforts were turned instead toward literary concerns, including the production of devotional literature, and translations of classical texts or works by male humanists.

Among the women who found a way to engage in philosophic questioning during this period were Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila. Julian not only lived in a thriving educational center, but her English retreat had not yet been much affected by the new currents of the Renaissance. And although Catherine of Siena became intimately involved in Renaissance politics, it was as a consequence of her reputation as a visionary and philosopher. Like Teresa of Avila, Julian and Catherine stand firmly in the tradition of medieval mystical piety and prophecy. Other women, either attached to royal houses, or daughters of well-educated professionals, simply lived in an environment in which learning was possible. This was the case with Murasaki Shikibu, Marguerite of Navarre, Christine de Pisan, Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera, Margaret More Roper and Marie le Jars de Gournay. And although learning was valued for men, women's education was less strongly encouraged, with perhaps a few exceptions. One such exception might be the case of a woman who might rule, either in her own right, as surrogate for a male ruler absent on military campaigns, or, as regent. The possibility of ruling, and the intellectual environment of learned advisors, would contribute to the likelihood that a woman like Marguerite of Navarre would have opportunities to study works of religion and philosophy. Another exception would be where a parent fostered an intellectual home environment and made a deliberate decision to provide advanced learning opportunities for daughter. Such was the case with Christine of Pisan, and with Margaret More Roper: their fathers actively encouraged their education.

Some philosophers can be seen as responding to specific contemporary social and political events. As military exploits resulted in political realignment, some, including Birgitta of Sweden, Christine of Pisan and Catherine of Siena offered advice grounded in moral and political theory to heads of state and church. Some, like Hildegard, challenged church doctrine on the nature of women's souls, and developed a concept of women's spiritual equality with men at a time of increasing marginalization of religious women. As wars contributed to the spread of disease, a need to develop a medical science that would be more effective against disease generated new philosophies of human nature and of medicine. Many philosophers, including Hildegard, and much later, Sabuco de Nantes engaged in those endeavours. The effects of Arabic incursions into southern Europe are in part reflected in Sabuco de Nantes' writings which show her familiarity with Arabic medical theory. Similarly, the effects of increased centralization of religious and political authority can be seen at those places in Sabuco's text where marginal notes indicate passages censored by the Inquisition through its practice of imprimaturing. And while social, political, religious and scientific developments were not directly the subject of the works of most women philosophers of this era, those developments can be understood as part of the environment in which the education of women and philosophical writing by women took place.

The reformation and counter-reformation were times of geographic and scientific discovery. This was a period of adventure: search for the riches of the Orient, for the true religion, for the fountain of youth, and for civilizations new and old. Close on the heels of the Copernican revolution, Columbus' travels to the Americas, the emergence of the new religious epistemologies, and the rapid advances in medical philosophy and medical science, came the rediscovery of Greek scepticism. Rekindled interest in scepticism undercut claims that religious knowledge had the same epistemological basis as did the new scientific knowledge which had yielded revolutionary advances in astronomy, geography, optics, mathematics and medicine. The sixteenth century revival of scepticism supplanted scholasticism and played an important part in the restoration of the authority of the Catholic church against the encroachments of protestantism. By claiming that faith instead of reason was the proper foundation of religious knowledge, scepti-

cism restored personal religious experience to the epistemological respect it had enjoyed in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. And while the skeptic philosopher Marie le Jars de Gournay initially focussed on questions of faith, she soon addressed other received doctrines, particularly that of the natural inferiority of women to men.

Our biographical knowledge even of famous male philosophers of earlier periods is often astonishingly incomplete, and our knowledge of their education and careers can be quite sketchy, although the institutional history of universities is becoming clearer. Our problems are compounded when we attempt to study women, for we know remarkably little about the teachers, libraries and curricula of even the best documented convents. The loss of recorded work by women leaves us even further hampered. Where education is conducted privately, recovery of information and materials may be even more difficult.

A second difficulty concerns the problems in interpreting such biographical material as we have. This may take several forms. The information often appears in a hagiographic style and the conventions for what material is included and how it is presented are quite different in a saint's life and a scholar's life. There is a tendency to stress woman's work as unusual, whether to call attention to her as a prodigy, or as a mouthpiece of God. Either view diminishes the role of the woman's own education and efforts. Although biographical and autobiographical accounts of women use the standard humility formulas very creatively, these formulas, as well as statements about writing done only under obedience to a superior, are especially likely to be misleading; great caution is required in interpreting them.

A third difficulty lies in assessing the work itself. Problems arise in assigning responsibility for important aspects of the work, whether vocabulary, ideas or illuminations. In addition to questions raised by collaborative methods within a convent, for instance, there are questions of the relationship of the author to her male associates. All women philosophers have significant connections with male scholars while the obverse is not the case. The parts played – enhancing or distorting – by patrons, fathers, teachers, confessors, preachers, scribes and assistants, need to be understood for a full comprehension of many of these texts. It is also clear that

social pressures sometimes acted against women writing at all, sometimes especially against more philosophic kinds of writing. This may be seen in pressures against women speaking publicly for political and moral reform, in the monopoly of universities on the systematic study of theology, and in the special vulnerability of women to critics on personal, moral and religious grounds. As a result, women writers may have deliberately chosen an oblique approach, and this may be one motive for some of the philosophic forms they adopted.

When we look for the characteristics which facilitate women's philosophic reflection and authorship several features appear. The women consistently come from the groups most likely to receive education – the highest levels of society in the early periods, the new wealthy urban classes in the later periods, and the families of professional humanists. Their education would be rated highly for anyone within their milieu, even though it may not be drawn from academic philosophic sources. Even the women writing in the vernacular have a strong grasp of the literature, and a good general knowledge. Their privileged backgrounds may also account for the self-confidence and personal courage some women displayed in pursuing philosophy under such inhospitable conditions.

Many women wrote for particular audiences, usually the novices and nuns of their religious community, like-minded colleagues at some distance, or, a deficient clergy in need of correction. Many of the women discussed in this volume seem very conscious of other writings by women, and appear to have derived great strength from seeing themselves as standing in a tradition, whether the tradition of the learned women of antiquity, or that initiated by Hildegard of Bingen. They also seem conscious of handing on that tradition and their own work to other women. When a woman's teaching is directed beyond a community of women, it is seldom heard unless accompanied by a prophetic voice.

Some women who lacked the institutional support of a community had an extremely strong mentor and patron, and their work may have been directed primarily toward him and his immediate circle. They would have been less likely to inspire continuation of their work by other women, and less likely to develop a distinctive genre. Their work is more likely, however, to be recognizable as philosophy, if it approximates the style and methods of their patron,

though they themselves are usually condemned to obscurity in his shadow.

The work of women in community seems to be highly collaborative, and often expressed in integrative and hybrid genres, as in the didactic plays of Roswitha and the illustrated encyclopedia of Herrad. While mainstream scholastic traditional genres seem closed to many of these women, the rhetorical quality of Heloise's writing is acknowledged to have been more highly developed than most male writers of the era. The medieval mystics in particular developed a characteristic literary form of expression which seems to have been well known and recognized. The number of writings which include poetry is striking, and the intense interest in illustration shown by Hildegard, Herrad and Christine of Pisan is unparalleled among male philosophers. It is that very artistic quality which had made it possible for some to classify the women philosophers as poets, novelists, playwrights, or visionaries but not philosophers. The devotional, literary, philological and art historical studies which brought attention to these women however, by the very nature of their own specialized interest, could not be expected to have done justice to the philosophic value of these women's work.

Like their male counterparts, women philosophers, in particular those of the earlier part of this period, were often also theologians. The distinctions between philosophy and theology were less clear then than would become the case in the modern period. In the east as well as the west, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and concepts of human nature were for the most part conceived against background theologies. Thus cosmology and philosophy of medicine were as deeply rooted in accounts of creation as ethics and epistemology were in accounts of salvation and revelation. When we also consider the role of religious institutions in manuscript preservation and in the arts education of the period, it is no wonder that philosophy at this time has a substantial theological content and orientation. Nevertheless, some exclusionary criteria are possible. Purely devotional works by a philosopher are mentioned in this volume to alert the reader to the full scope of her *corpus*. In contrast, works which examine philosophically such theological issues as the nature of God, and the nature and consequences of sin are analyzed in terms of their metaphysical, epistemological and ethical import. Likewise, because Mary was considered as arch-

etype of ethically ideal womanhood, women philosophers' views on the doctrine of the immaculate conception can provide insights into their views on women and on human nature. Theories about human nature, and specifically, about women can consequently play important roles in analyses of questions of free will and determinism, virtue, and, social justice. Therefore, although the distinctions between philosophy and theology are rarely clear, their connections, and the consequences of those connections are, we hope, always evident.

The women who left works of philosophical significance came from varied philosophic traditions. Murasaki Shikibu (970–1031) came from a Japanese Shintō culture which had been heavily influenced by Buddhism for the preceding four centuries. Murasaki came from a literary family and, following an early widowhood became lady-in-waiting to the teenaged Empress, to whom she secretly taught Chinese. Through Chinese both women gained access to a world of literature and learning generally inaccessible to women of their time. Murasaki's philosophical epic novel, *Tale of Genji* explores the existentialist issues confronting medieval Japanese women: the relevance to the individual of philosophical systems, intentionality and objectification; existence, freedom and choice; anxiety, dread and death; and the absurd. Coming from a medieval Japanese woman who was both a ward and employee of the imperial court, *Tale of Genji* assumes importance as a symbol of Murasaki's personal courage and integrity in its challenge to the cultural/religious conception of women as creatures of an inferior incarnation.

Hildegard of Bingen was born in Germany in 1098 and lived until 1179. Educated initially at the convent of Disibodenberg, at a young age she became an abbess, succeeding her teacher, Jutta. With the eventual publication of an account of her revelations, she developed a following and exerted considerable political and religious influence. Hildegard is known for her cosmology and metaphysics, her philosophy of medicine, and her feminist religious philosophy. In addition, she authored a number of musical and devotional works, and wrote on geology, biology, plant physiology and other scientific subjects. Her writings extend to many volumes, most are unavailable in English.

Heloise, who lived from 1101–1164 was known primarily for her

relationship with Abelard, and as a participant in one of the greatest love stories of all time. Heloise lived with her maternal uncle, a man named Fulbert following an early education at the Benedictine convent of Argenteuil. That convent had a reputation for education of women equal only to Gandersheim and Hohenbourg. Heloise's early reputation for learning was so great that by approximately age 16 the greatest living philosopher in all of France, an unordained cleric named Abelard, agreed to become her private tutor. Seduced and pregnant by him soon thereafter, she would argue against agreeing to a marriage intended to legitimize the child and save her reputation. Her correspondence with Abelard as well as Abelard's own writings reveal Heloise to be a philosopher who adopted Ciceronian views on the nature of love and Abelard's principles of the morality of intention, and who incorporated those views into her arguments against marriage.

Herrad of Hohenbourg, sometimes known as Herrad of Landsburg, was a 12th-century abbess whose encyclopedia *Hortus Deliciarum*, or *Garden of Delights* is the first extensive encyclopedia written for women. Her intent was to prepare for literate women a pictorial and prose compendium of philosophy, religion, and history. It contains over 300 miniatures, in which women are prominently depicted. For example, Herrad depicts philosophy as a woman from whose hands flow seven rivulets of wisdom to Socrates and Plato seated in an inner circle surrounded by the seven liberal arts who are also women. From her writing it is clear that Herrad was familiar with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, through secondary sources, and with Anselm of Canterbury, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzus, Jerome, John Chrysostom and Peter Lombard. In addition, she had evidently studied contemporary church historians, and was probably aware of the teachings of an older contemporary, Hildegard of Bingen.

Beatrice (Beatrijs) of Nazareth was a 13th-century Dutch mystic whose writings on the nature of mystic religious experience typifies medieval religious mysticism. Beatrice was born *circa* 1200 and died in 1268, prioress of the Cistercian convent Nazareth. Her major writing, *The Seven Modes of Sacred Love* describe both the mystic's experience and the way to ever-certain ever more intense knowledge of the presence of and love for God. Through it, we learn some of the varieties of religious mystical experience and the extent to which

mystical experiences were philosophically viewed as a more immediate form of philosophical knowledge.

Born about 1207, and probably from an aristocratic family, Mechtild of Magdeburg was a beguine who, at the end of her life retired to the famous convent of Helfta. Initially known for her outspoken criticism of the decline of religious devotion and knowledge, Mechtild was the first mystic to write in the German vernacular. Like her Dutch contemporaries, Beatrice of Nazareth and Hadewych of Antwerp, Mechtild represented the tradition of "love mysticism," a tradition that continued through the next century with Catherine of Siena in Italy, and Julian of Norwich in England. As with other mystics, Mechtild presented an epistemology that affirmed the value of personal experience in the application and comprehension of philosophical knowledge.

Hadewych of Antwerp lived prior to 1250, and from her writings appears to have been familiar with the writings and teachings of Hildegard of Bingen. Her writing, like that of the other women mystics, is of a very high literary quality, rich in imagery. In her writings, Jesus Christ is identified with *Minne* a Dutch and German word of the feminine gender, meaning "love itself." According to Hadewych, our natural love of God leads us to want to complete the task of returning to God by following Christ. This means living with his divine nature through the exercise of reason, and living with his humanity through the exercise of virtue. When reason has fulfilled its legitimate function, encountering Truth itself, *Minne* herself assumes leadership of the soul which yields itself to *Minne*. The soul must discover Truth. Then, under the power of *Minne* it is free to conform itself to the will of God, thereby achieving unification with God. Fulfilling the duties of *Minne* herself requires fulfilling the duties of charity. Thus, Hadewych's metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of religion imply her ethics.

Birgitta of Sweden (Birgitta Suecica) was born in 1302 near Upsala in Sweden. Prior to her birth her mother (who had just survived a shipwreck) experienced a vision predicting the birth of a girl who would be very dear to God. A local priest experienced a similar vision containing a message that a daughter would be born to Birgerus, and would have a voice heard by the world in a miraculous way. Born to a noble family in circumstances which anticipated her intellectual influence and her personal piety, Birgit-

ta of Sweden addressed some of the most significant social, philosophical, theological and political issues of her day. She personally founded hospitals and a double monastery, and, campaigned actively for (and secured) peace between Pope Urbanus V and Emperor Karl IV of Germany. Her philosophical writings include the development of a concept of God, a concept of mankind, and, an account of justified political authority. Birgitta's concept of Mary depicts the mother of God as wise, active, and an ideal of womanhood. A mystic and ascetic who founded a religious community after raising her own family, Birgitta actively addressed herself to warring heads of church and state, arguing for separation of religious and secular power, claiming that they shared moral responsibility and accountability for their use of power.

Born *circa* 1342, English mystic and recluse Julian of Norwich was known as an Anchorite. Living through several episodes of the Black Death, Julian died *circa* 1417. Julian's outlook on life was no doubt deeply affected by the despair that characterized the age and place in which she lived. The threat to the unified church represented by the Avignon papacy, the Hundred Years War which began just before her birth, the massacre of Jews in Germany and other social, religious, and political disasters were punctuated by repeated outbreaks of bubonic plague that swept Europe. The religious turmoil culminated in the Great Schism, the accompanying rise of the Lollards and Wycliffe and the legalized burning of heretics at the stake. In an age where church, king, and mother nature were about equally responsible for the creation of widespread human fear, suffering and death, Julian of Norwich created an epistemology and a metaphysics that stressed the possibilities of knowing divine love in a time of hopeless confusion, and of experiencing joy in the face of such horror.

Catherine of Siena was born *circa* 1347 and died in 1380. A great philosopher in the tradition of Christian mystics, Catherine was also extremely active politically. She had a large personal following of religious laics and was correspondent to Queen Elisabeth of Hungary, Queen Giovanna of Naples, counselled popes Gregory XI (when the papacy was at Avignon, and later, at Rome) Urban VI and Clemens VII. She lived during a time of great religious and political turmoil in Italy, was active in the war between the Italian cities, and in recruitment for a crusade to the Holy Land. Her

political activities were motivated by her desire for church unification. She disapproved of the politicization of the church which she saw as fragmenting. Instead, she preached religious humanism and charity as ways of reducing class differences and improving the lot of society's worst off. Central to her ethical theory was the view that responsibility for and love of neighbor was a moral imperative that was a consequence of loving and knowing God.

Popularly known as the first person ever to be self-supporting through writing alone, Christine Pisan was an uncommon scholar and an uncommon woman of the late 14th–early 15th century. Born in Venice in 1365, but raised in France at the court of Charles V (where her father was court astrologer), Christine received an education against the advice of her mother. Christine is a major author of her time, a writer of prose as well as of poetry. In this respect she is part of the tradition of allegorical philosophers including Murasaki, Herrad, Mechtild, Hadewych and others. Her most famous work *The Book of the City of Ladies* is in part deliberately modelled on Augustine's *Civitate Dei*, and is in part a response to what Christine saw as the misogynist literature that was popular reading among aristocrats and academics in Europe. *Cité des Dames* constructs a walled city for the protection of women from harm: physical as well as moral. In it, the three virtues, Ladies Reason, Justice and Duty, guide women. *Cité des Dames* differs from other books written for women of that period. Christine's three virtues offer deontological arguments against the oppression of women. But they also offer teleological arguments that the oppression of women is contrary to the goal of improving society itself.

In 1562, Louisa Oliva Sabuco de Nantes was born in Alcaraz, Spain. At that time, Spanish universities, churches, state archives, and private collections housed Arabic medical treatises which synthesized the theories of Hippocrates, Galen and near eastern medicine. The study of Hippocrates and Galen spread, and the scope of medical science expanded from medical practice to the development of new philosophies of human nature. Among those developing new philosophies of human nature were three major 16th century Spanish writers: Gomez Pereyra, Juan Huarte de San Juan, and (Luisa) Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera. Her philosophy of human nature is based on familiar medieval cosmologies which hold that humans are a microcosm of the universe. Sabuco explains disease

and debilitation in terms of psychological states accompanying and evidenced by the moral emotions. Her cosmology and metaphysics inform her philosophy of medicine, her moral psychology and her moral philosophy. Sabuco writes long before Harvey's development of his circulatory theory (1628), long before Wren's neurological drawings (1664), and before van Leeuwenhoek's description of bacterial movement, (1665). Yet she offers a fascinating theory of the ability of reason and moral virtue to cause physical and mental disease by causing improper circulation of nerve sap she calls "chilo". She bases her theory on the received doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Galen, Averroes and other philosophers, and, on recent advances in medical science, particularly, anatomical studies.

In neighboring France, in 1565, Marie le Jars de Gournay was born into an intellectual environment as rich as that of Spain, but differing in important ways. She lived during the reigns of Charles IX, (in whose court her father served), Henri III, Henri IV, Louis XIII and Louis XIV. It was the time of the counter-reformation and the "new scepticism" of Sextus Empiricus. Foremost among the sceptical philosophers were two cousins, Francisco Sanchez and Michel de Montaigne. The hand-picked exponent of Montaigne's scepticism was the philosopher Marie le Jars de Gournay. And although de Gournay's name will always be remembered as the editor of Montaigne's *Essays*, her own work as a moral philosopher in her essays, and as a feminist in her treatises, *Egalité des hommes et des femmes* and *Grief des dames* identify her as one of the earliest of the modern feminist philosophers.

A great deal of research and scholarship has resulted in the creation of this volume. With few exceptions, the women whose lives and writings we examine go unmentioned in the standard history of philosophy texts available in English. We have not, indeed, we could not have been able to extract from those texts stories of women philosophers. Rather, information about our subjects has been gleaned through the histories of art, religion, literature, science and medicine. Great care has been taken to learn the truth, but completeness is less likely. It is unlikely that these are the only women of that time who were philosophers. Nor is it likely that the information we present exhausts the historical record of any philosopher's accomplishments. It is our hope and expectation

at this point to provide *a* history, and not to claim that it is the definitive history. With this beginning, we hope to inspire other scholars to explore further; the Bibliography lists useful resources for doing so.

Indeed, that further exploration has already begun. In the two intervening years between the appearance of the first volume of this series and this, the second volume, articles about women philosophers have appeared in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, and *Resources for Feminist Research/Documentation sur la Recherche Feministe*. *Hypatia* has a volume in press (1989) dedicated to women in the history of philosophy. History of Philosophy courses are beginning to include the study of women philosophers. Several doctoral dissertations, and full-length English translations of works by women philosophers have recently appeared and more are in progress. In the course of pursuing such research, previously unreported information about and texts by women who are the subjects of this volume, as well as by unknown women philosophers will no doubt come to light. If this volume facilitates such discoveries we will have done our work well.

The historical period beginning with feudalism and ending with the counter-reformation witnessed enormous changes and development both inside and outside of philosophy. And although it is a period in which women were excluded by religious doctrine, secular law and social custom from many aspects of public life and personal intellectual growth, we know that many women of the period both created and took advantage of possibilities for learning. That some could have excelled in that most abstract of intellectual pursuits, philosophy, is both a testimony to the efforts of their foremothers to foster a tradition and climate of learning for women, and to the individual abilities and courage of those who fulfilled that tradition. The women philosophers from the middle ages to the counter-reformation wrote about the same philosophical topics that their male contemporaries did, including epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. And although their works survive, they have heretofore been virtually ignored by historians of philosophy. These women are not women on the fringes of philosophy, but philosophers on the fringes of history. It is our pleasure to introduce you to them.

1. Murasaki Shikibu

MARY ELLEN WAITHE

I. INTRODUCTION

Genji Monogatari by Murasaki Shikibu (970–1031) is a work of philosophy which does not follow the traditional western format for philosophical writing: discussion, analysis, exposition, perhaps dialogue. Rather, it takes the form of an epic novel. What it recounts is of philosophic importance for aesthetics, moral philosophy, philosophy of religion, cosmology and, metaphysics. Murasaki deserves comprehensive analysis regarding each of these areas of philosophy. In this essay, however, I will focus on the metaphysical and epistemological aspects of her work, paying particular attention to existentialist issues. One reads *Genji Monogatari* much the way one reads Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, de Beauvoir, Sartre, or any other literary existentialist philosopher: there is a story (in Murasaki's case, many stories within stories), and the story leaves us puzzled in a peculiarly philosophical way. The puzzles it gets us to pose for ourselves concern basic questions about human existence and the meaning of life. *Genji Monogatari* utilizes the literary form of epic novel to trace the effects of early 11th-century eastern philosophies on Japanese society and to present its author's criticism of those philosophies. Murasaki forces us to take stock of the effects of such a culture on women's abilities to achieve *nirvana* and forces us to consider existential questions about the philosophies which informed her society. *Genji Monogatari* shows us the religious, social, moral, and political life of 11th century Japanese women. It has much to say about the nature of relationships; about the values of loyalty, filial piety, and truthfulness; about class differences, intentionality, freedom, choice, anxiety, existence,

Shintō metaphysics and cosmology; and about Buddhist moral theory. Although this essay touches on each of those topics, constraints of space require the discussion to be a general introduction to Murasaki's existentialism, rather than a close examination of any particular question.

Murasaki's characters (and there are several dozen major characters) each bear multiple relationships to other characters, and, as we read about their intertwined lives, Murasaki makes us ask "why have we come to this conclusion about that?" The analyses of issues are subtle and complex, with different characters representing different premises of an argument, or different versions of it. The arguments evolve as characters interact and as individual characters modify earlier views in the light of additional empirical evidence derived from their own experiences. Consequently, arguments unfold slowly, with repeated modifications in a way that is not at all conducive to the usual methods of academic referencing. Documenting Murasaki's arguments by quoting appropriate passages without sacrificing the aesthetic quality of her prose, would require reprinting several pages of the text to demonstrate each point. The alternative – summarizing her philosophical positions by referring to the commentary literature – makes it possible to represent Murasaki's views within constraints of space.

At the end of *Genji Monogatari* we find ourselves reflecting on the fact that the book is largely about women. We see them struggle through their lives, now attempting to temper, now attempting to tolerate the institutions which control them. A woman's existence is a fated existence. Fated to be women, Murasaki's characters are fated to be servants, consorts, wives. Amongst them, an unnamed heroine, whom the commentary literature refers to as Ukifune, emerges. Through her, and through the other women of the book, Murasaki gets us to question "what's wrong?" with the cosmology and metaphysics through which they as Japanese, identify themselves.

Murasaki uses Ukifune as a vehicle through which she questions the nature of being in the world. Ukifune wrestles with the doctrine of intentionality as she struggles to escape being the object of others' perceptions and beliefs, for they view her, and have caused her to view herself, as other than she is. Murasaki's Ukifune struggles away from deterministic moral philosophy and toward the

possibility of free will, as she makes choices and finds that she can define herself through choice-making. Like Sartre, Ukifune experiences dread at having to define her own future once she has recognized that she can make herself free. But such existentialist pursuits by women do not fit neatly with Japanese cosmology, metaphysics, and religion. Murasaki's contribution to the existentialist dialogue can be better understood through a quick sketch of her philosophical heritage.

II. BACKGROUND

1. *Shintō*

By the third century, A.D. Shintō had become Japan's common religion. Like their western contemporaries, the early Japanese saw themselves as an integral part of the cosmos. According to Francis Grant, Shintō regards the beginnings of Japanese history as

. . . ages before, not only in the early days of [the] earth, but even before that, within the precincts of Heaven. For it is in the Takama-no-Hara, the Plain of High Heaven, that the seeds of this beginning of Nippon lie.¹

Shintō is a natural religion which celebrates the determinism of humans and all other natural entities as effects of the will of nature.² According to Sakamaki Shunzō, the Japanese language

. . . had no word for nature, as something apart and distinct from man, something that might be contemplated by man, the "thinking reed." Man was treated as an integral part of the whole, closely associated and identified with the elements and forces of the world about him.³

Shintō places great moral and aesthetic value on the virtues of purity, loyalty, and filial piety. These latter virtues preserve the purity of relationships with others in part because a person exemplifies those virtues by not setting herself apart from persons to whom she is related. In Shintō, through purity of the body and

4 *Murasaki Shikibu*

purity of intention, a person is able to introspect and meditate about her relationship to the divinity of nature. For Shintō, it was a moral imperative that human life be harmonious with that of the sacred *kami*⁴ which permeated the universe. These animistic metaphysical and ethical principles informed the beliefs of members of every Japanese clan.

While Japan's religious foundations were Shintō, its social unit was the clan system. The clans themselves were social, political, economic, and religious communities. Each clan shared a *kami*, and this common denominator was a stronger indicator of social and political cohesion than was consanguinity. Early Japanese mythology included a belief in the divine origin of the imperial clan. Shintō makes no distinction between government and religious worship. Ancient (as well as many modern) Japanese perceived their national, racial destiny in terms of consecration to the worship of the deities of nature in part through the person of the *Mikado*, who was at once national high priest and chief of state. The term for governance, *matsuri-gotō*, meant "affairs pertaining to worship."⁵

2. *Buddhism*

In the late 6th century, following the loss of Korean territory and the defeat of its ally, the Paekche Kingdom, Japan experienced an influx of Korean refugees. Most were Buddhists. Their religion spread to Japanese traders, diplomats, courtiers and artists. Buddhism became the national religion by decree of Prince Shōtoku (*shōtoku* means "sovereign moral power").⁶ Prince Shōtoku had intended Buddhism to be the vehicle through which he could consolidate the support of Japanese religious, cultural, and economic leaders, and through them, have the royal family emerge as the political and cultural leaders of the clans in a national state. But Shōtoku had underestimated the resistance of the clans to such a move. The feudal lords and clans were almost as politically powerful as the royal family, and ordinary people identified with their clans. Above all, the Japanese saw themselves as Shintō. Buddhism was therefore incorporated into Shintō, rather than substituted for it.

Buddhism is a philosophically rich religion encompassing many

schools, each of which has its particular emphasis on or interpretation of some one or more of its doctrines. To oversimplify, we can say that Buddhism is based on a set of four tenets: (1) that suffering is a characteristic of human existence; (2) that desire and possession of what is desirable causes suffering; (3) that by ceasing all desire, one can cease all suffering; and (4) that one can end desire by adopting the right dispositions, virtues, and conduct towards others, and, by undertaking an appropriate life-long program of meditation and contemplation. Through these processes, a person can attain a state of serene clarity of mind and body known as *nirvana*.

3. *Philosophical Evolution*

The beliefs of the Shintō religion had been transmitted orally for centuries. Around A.D. 712, following the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, the chronicle *Kojiki* recorded Shintō beliefs and myths about the origin of the universe. Its "Record of Ancient Matters" is the Shintō equivalent of the Book of Genesis. Shortly afterwards, around A.D. 720, the *Nihongi* chronicles recorded the details of ancient Japanese civilization:

In the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* we learn the story of the Creation of Earth and the birth of gods and men-gods which have a close kinship to Japan itself and have deep concern in her people and their destiny.⁷

Both chronicles also recorded myths which provided a divine basis for imperial sovereignty. But the strength of the clans would prevent national unification for some time to come.

Shintō related humans to their historical past, through the deities of nature which originated with the universe. Duties were derived through historical and consanguinous relationships. The connections to the gods of nature were through one's ancestral clan and, through the divine clan of the *Mikado*, the spiritual and political authority. Buddhism related one to the present and to one's future eternity, through introspection about one's own nature, and through exemplification of the virtues of simplicity, veracity and selflessness.

Just as Shintō assimilated Buddhism, it assimilated many aspects of other oriental philosophies. The Confucian precepts of filial piety, veneration of ancestors, rights in reciprocity, and duties based on social rank or position fit well with Shintō's animism. The Confucian virtues of honesty and sincerity also informed Shintō moral philosophy. So did Taoistic metaphysical concepts, including the oneness of humans and nature, spiritual freedom and peace. The Yin/Yang school's emphasis on natural orderliness and lawfulness of natural and social process, and, on the unity and determinateness of human and natural action, also accorded well with Shintō.

Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy, with its concept of humanity unified through truth and spiritual enlightenment and its worship of one god, provided philosophic support for the consolidation of spiritual power in the personhood of one individual. For Japanese, this could only be the *Mikado*, the greatest earthly *kami*.⁸ The Heian aristocracy adopted the Mahāyāna Principles of Buddhism. This Sino-Japanese version of Buddhism reserved fewer aspects of religious observances to the priestly class than did traditional Buddhism.⁹ It also taught the existentialist doctrine of the void. With the popularization of Māhāyana Buddhism in Japan, two new schools emerged: Tendai and Shigon. The former prioritized the teachings of the many Buddhist sects, and the latter emphasized monasticism and sacramental rites. Both saw the essence of Shintō as Buddha.

4. *Women*

The foregoing is but a brief and altogether too simplistic description of the religious and philosophical heritage which Murasaki Shikibu and all Japanese shared. What all Japanese did not share was equality of social position, equality of political power, and, it was believed, equal potential for moral excellence and for admission to paradise. Murasaki lived at the height of the Heian dynasty, when women were excluded from educational opportunities, from most aspects of public life, and, according to Tendai Buddhism, from direct access to the Western Paradise. According to William H. McCullough, marriage in the polygamous aristocracy during the early Heian period meant that couples lived separately, husbands

commuting to visit wives.¹⁰ Wives lived in their own homes, supported by their families, raising their children in a residence which was inherited matrilineally. At the time Murasaki was writing *Genji*, this pattern was changing to one in which the husband lived in the matriarch's home or in a small house nearby. Support of the wife and the couple's children was provided by her family. Economic dependence on one's husband was considered shameful and demeaning for a court lady, according to Haruo Shirane.¹¹ It meant that her father had inadequate resources for her support.

Women in the aristocracy lived lives of comparative leisure, even when they were courtiers in service to women of higher aristocratic status. Its wealth, social prominence and political strength clearly made the Fujiwara clan the most powerful. But the clan was marked by bloody internecine intrigues, as each of its families manoeuvred to place its sons in high government posts, and, in a polygamous aristocracy, to have its daughters named imperial consort, or, failing that, court lady. Murasaki Shikibu was a Fujiwara court lady.

III. BIOGRAPHY

Murasaki Shikibu is almost certainly not the real name of our philosopher. Rather, it is believed that the author of *Genji* was given the nick-name Murasaki, because the real author strongly resembled Lady Murasaki, a major character in *Genji Monogatari*.¹² Murasaki, which means "Violet," also has linguistic connections with the name Fujiwara, meaning "field of wistaria," violet-colored flowers.¹³ Murasaki Shikibu lived from 970–1031. She came from a literary family of the Fujiwara clan. Her great-grandfather Kanesuke (877–933) contributed to the publishing of the first imperial anthology, the *Kokinshū*. Her grandfather, Masatada (910?–962) was a noted poet.¹⁴ Her father, Fujiwara Tametoki, was a minor court official, as well as a well-published poet in Japanese and Chinese, and a graduated master of Confucianism *Monjōshō*. He attained the rank of Shiki-Bu, the Senior Secretary in the Imperial Bureau of Ceremonial, a post which he lost when the Emperor Kazan was forced to retire. He was appointed to a series of territorial governorships over the succeeding years of his life,

each appointment punctuated with extended periods of private scholarly study. It is from her father's title that Murasaki acquired that of Shikibu, or Lady.¹⁵

Although the study of Chinese was forbidden to women (it was thought too strenuous), Murasaki had learned it young. Her brother Noboruni studied the Chinese chronicles *Shih Chi* with their father. Young Murasaki was often present when her father was tutoring her brother. She mastered the work more quickly than Noboruni, causing her father to express regret that she was not a boy. Even as an adult, when she became attached to the imperial court, the culture's attitude toward educated women continued to force her to hide her learning:

But afterwards, when I was told that it was not good even for men to be proud of their learning, I would not even write so much as a figure in Chinese characters, pretending utter ignorance. I was ashamed of that learning of which Saemon-no Naishi, a court lady, later accused me of being conceited about; I even [now] feign inability to read the characters on the screens."¹⁶

Murasaki herself eventually entered court service. She had been the third or fourth wife of Fujiwara Nobutaka, an officer who was reputedly her father's age.¹⁷ In 999 they had a daughter, Kenshi, (known as Echigo no Ben, and later as Daini no Sanmi) at a time when Nobutaka was Governor of Yamashiro. Two years later, Murasaki's husband died during an epidemic. It is believed that two or three years after that, Murasaki began work on what was to become the epic novel *Genji Monogatari*. Her work was already well known when she became one of the many court ladies in the entourage of the teenaged Jōtō-Mon'in Shōshi.¹⁸ (At age eleven Shōshi had become the second consort of the Emperor Ichijō and at age twelve, following the death of his first wife, Empress.) Murasaki's diary records the birth of the then twenty year-old Shōshi's son, Prince Goreizei.¹⁹ Murasaki's daughter became nurse to the infant emperor. Murasaki's mistress-pupil, Jōtō-Mon'in, also expressed the forbidden desire to learn Chinese. In secret, Murasaki taught her. Both had gained access to a world of literature and philosophy generally inaccessible to women of their time. In addi-

tion to *Genji Monogatari* and her diary *Murasaki Shikibu Nikki*, Murasaki also left significant works of autobiographical poetry. Murasaki was reportedly praised for her ability to interpret the intellectual Chinese poetry of the T'ang Dynasty, particularly that of Po Chü-i.²⁰ Knowledge of such poetry would have been common for aristocrats of the Heian era in Japan. She was nick-named Lady Nihongi because she reportedly tutored the Empress Shōshi on that historical chronicle. Her contributions to the life of the royal palace can therefore be described as academic: philosophical, literary and linguistic.

Hand written copies of Murasaki's poetry and of large portions of *Genji Monogatari* were privately reproduced in the works of other authors including the *Sarashina Nikki*,²¹ a work which appeared several decades after *Genji Monogatari*. According to Professor Taneda,²² the Temple of Shochiin on Koyasan Mountain also contains a copy of Murasaki's work inscribed in official temple documents. Both *Meigetsuki*, the diary of Fujiwara No Teika (1162–1241)²³ and the anonymous *Mumyōzōshi*, (generally agreed to have been written between 1196 and 1201) attest to the importance of Murasaki's work. It is interesting that *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* identifies this essay as authored by a woman and as being a unique work among classical Asian literature, one which

. . . deals primarily . . . with literature by and for women . . . [Murasaki is among the] outstanding women who wrote in genres that men as well might practice The author takes obvious pride in the established tradition of great women writers. In Asian terms, this is radically different from China and Korea; and no woman in any other language could validly make this claim, least of all at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁴

These three sources on classical Japanese literature testify to the respect Murasaki must have enjoyed. She had only one contemporary counterpart that we know of – Sei Shōnagon, the author of a collection of essays entitled *Makura no Sōshi*. Sei Shōnagon, (b. 966), also of the Fujiwara clan, was in the service of the Empress Teishi (Sadako). Murasaki's preeminence among Japanese writers

of the Heian era is unmistakable. Her *Genji* is widely known in many editions and has generated a vast secondary literature.

But Murasaki had more than fleeting fame. The *Princeton Companion* places *Genji Monogatari* among the best of world literature, and as representative of the best Japanese classical literature:

It has made Japanese literature one whose greatness is referrable to a single work, like the *Aeneid* in Roman literature, the *Divine Comedy* in Italian, or *Don Quixote* in Spanish. A lady of a lesser Fujiwara house of whom we know very little produced, for a small circle of an elite class and especially for female readers, one of the handful of masterpieces of world literature. That much is clear, and that much makes Murasaki Shikibu and Japanese literature unique among the literatures of the world. And yet none of those things matter as much as the complex artistry of the work, an artistry giving us a sense of the close relation between art and life, and giving us also versions of our own lives that at times arouse our laughter or bring our tears, but an artistry that transcends both to a fuller understanding of the limits and capacities of human life.²⁵

IV. WRITINGS

Genji Monogatari reveals Murasaki's own concern with the implications for women of the Shintō and Buddhism, and in particular, the Tendai sect, the Mahāyāna principles and the Pure Land "other-worldly" Buddhism taught by Genshin Sōzu (942–1017). But *Genji* contains other philosophical influences as well. Buddhist and Confucian moral philosophies and other aspects of oriental philosophies are represented by various characters in the novel. Murasaki does not attempt to syncretize the ethical principles implicit in these two great philosophies; rather they are merely sources of a common, descriptive terminology of her cultural environment.²⁶

We will recall that Shunzō²⁷ had noted that the Japanese language did not distinguish humans from nature. That Murasaki's native tongue did not lend itself to a non-deterministic concept of human nature, may help explain the elaborate contextual apparatus

needed to depict the development of some of her female characters into moral agents. According to Professor Taneda, "the mother of one of the court ladies, Kisaragi" best epitomizes those Murasaki characters who were capable of independent moral action. If we compare Murasaki's female character Ukifune to famous female characters of modern western literature, we would no doubt come to a conclusion similar to that which Earl Miner reached:

The effect . . . is to make a character such as Ukifune less an agent clearly apart in the world, less an individual distinguished from others in the story, than a human entity much more continuous with other characters, more defined by relation to them, and more a part of the world.²⁸

But if we contrast Murasaki's female characters, including Ukifune, to the conception of women and of men in the Heian dynasty, we see, according to Taneda, that Murasaki's conceptualization and representation of women is to a lesser extent as determined natural objects and to a greater extent as free, responsible moral agents. Furthermore, Taneda notes, Murasaki's characters were acknowledged to have natural rights as well as moral responsibilities towards others. They were portrayed as having moral responsibility for the results of their actions. This view of women, Taneda argues, presaged the conception of women that emerged in the Kamakura era (1186–1336).²⁹

Murasaki's female characters struggle with existentialist dilemmas, for self-determination, or at least, for control over some specific aspect of their lives. Murasaki makes us see that it is their acceptance of their *karma* (fate in the sense of destiny) and the role of the male royalty and aristocracy in determining that destiny which prevent Heian women's self-determination. The men act legally, and in that sense, they act religiously, but Murasaki makes us see how miserable and hopeless women feel because of their treatment by men. But, if the women are rightfully treated under law and religion (which are indistinct), why are they so unhappy? The answer is that something is wrong with the philosophical foundations of the society. Murasaki leads us to the inescapable conclusion that of her dozens of characters, only Ukifune is on the track to discovering a new philosophical foundation. That track

involves confronting existentialist dilemmas. Interestingly, and for reasons to be discussed below, Tendai and Mahāyāna Buddhism as incorporated into Shintō, are depicted not only as the source of the existentialist dilemmas, but with one crucial modification, as the way to resolve them.

1. *Ukifune*

Ukifune, the illegitimate daughter of Prince Hachi is unhappily part of a family of the minor aristocracy. Her mother had been consort to Prince Hachi, and thus Ukifune was conceived; but the prince died before he could legitimize her. Her mother married a Governor, and had several more children. This left Ukifune in the uncomfortable position of not really having a place in her family during her lifetime. Through the device of a woman denied the most basic psychological mooring of medieval Japanese society, a place in her rightful royal family, Murasaki challenges the metaphysics, cosmology, and moral philosophy that was Japanese culture. We must remember that Shintō, with its accommodation of Buddhist and Confucian philosophy, was not an academic affectation of Japanese philosophers. Rather, it was the world view of all Japanese. Shintō was Japan. What Murasaki is doing through the character we call Ukifune, was challenging, stretching, a culture's identity. Ukifune sees herself as identity-less. The events of Ukifune's life reinforce this view. She is, as her appellation suggests (see 2(c), below), drifting, directionless, miserable. Can she change this? Everyone tells her no. Everyone tells her not even to question why her life is as it is. It is as it is and will be as it will be because that is what having a destiny means. Ukifune is but a thing of nature, not an agent. She is caused to act in a particular way because she has a woman's destiny. Others see her in terms of that destiny, in terms of her family's status, in terms of her relationship to them. But through Murasaki's authorial invention, Ukifune is made to confront existentialist dilemmas about intentionality and objectification, about existence and the void, and about freedom and choice.

2. Existentialism

To describe existentialist issues, and their relationships to each other, it will be useful both to quote at length from the concise descriptions of existentialist dilemmas as presented by Alasdair MacIntyre in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and to relate those descriptions to the plot of *Genji Monogatari*. We can summarize five issues: first, the relationship of the individual to philosophical systems; second, intentionality and objectification; third, existence, freedom and choice; fourth, anxiety, dread and death; fifth, the absurd.

(a) *The Individual and Philosophical Systems*. MacIntyre first describes the issue of the individual and systems:

A philosophical system was for Kierkegaard an attempt to understand individual existence within a conceptual scheme of a kind that would exhibit a logically necessary connection between every individual part and the conceptual scheme of the whole universe. People in the mass, or those who live out a stereotyped role, are people who understand themselves in terms of some concept or concepts they happen to embody. In both cases the individual is secondary to the concept it embodies. In fact however, what exists comes first; concepts are necessarily inadequate attempts to grasp individual existence, which always evades complete conceptualization.³⁰

To one degree or another, Murasaki's female characters recognize that the conceptual scheme which informs their cultural universe does not include them as they see themselves. Ukifune, in particular, does not fit neatly into "her place" in the scheme of things. While this would have been barely noticeable to many around her, the dissatisfaction and dread with which we, as readers, know she lived her pre-sacerdotal life count as evidence for us that Ukifune does not fit neatly into the Shinto-Buddhist conceptual framework. For Ukifune and for Murasaki, Shintō and Buddhist concepts of the nature of the universe and of human nature, are inadequate tools with which to grasp their own individual existence. It was the only framework Murasaki knew, and the only one within which she struggled to fit.

(b) *Intentionality and Objectification*. Examination of this issue yields richer explanations of the ways in which Ukifune and, by extension, Murasaki could not understand their own existence. Oddly, they did not fully exist within the Shintō-Buddhist framework. But before I explain why they did not exist within their own conceptual framework, let me offer MacIntyre's description of what he calls "the intentionality" issue.

Among post-Husserl existentialists, notably Sartre, the doctrine of intentionality is used to underline a fundamental difference between my knowledge of myself and my knowledge of others. Other people, so it is asserted, are viewed not as they are but as intentional objects of my perceptions, my beliefs, my emotions. But to myself I can never be such an object, nor am I in fact an object, and if they regard me as such their view of me is necessarily falsified . . . To make others the object of my perceptions or beliefs is to view them as other than they are.³¹

Murasaki's characters, and indeed grammatical subjects in Japanese generally, are presented entirely in terms that objectify their perceived relational networks with others. The individual is seen primarily in terms of how he or she is concretely related to others, not in terms of an abstract, individual self, but in terms of rank, position, family, etc.³²

Kaoru (who passes as Genji's son but who is in reality the son of Kasiwagi) was in love with Ukifune's older sister, the now-deceased Agemaki, (who, like Ukifune, was also Prince Hachi's daughter). Kaoru continues to grieve for the dead Agemaki and seeks out Ukifune, who, he has been told, resembles her. He moves her from the house of her stepfather, the Governor, to Uji, where he intends to keep her, at least until he can ready the house in the city for her. Kaoru has objectified her and made her into the other, her dead sister, and, has used Ukifune, as such, to assuage his grief.

Niou, the third son of the emperor and empress, quite by accident, finds Ukifune at Uji and falls in love with her. Ukifune eventually finds herself attracted to him, but she is committed to Kaoru. The spoiled, handsome, willful Niou, accustomed to having his way, disguises himself as Kaoru and rapes Ukifune. Niou has objectified her and, by falsifying his identity, manipulated her into

submitting to his advances. He has made Ukifune into the source of his gratification.

Miner tells us that like

. . . the other characters – perhaps even more so – she is known to us by the failed understanding of her by fellow characters. Such relativism of subject and object implies a human identity that is essentially continuous with – or at least relative to – other identities (Niou, Kaoru, etc.). Shintō conceptions contribute to this continuity . . .

Here Miner refers to Shintō's lack of distinction between humans and nature. He continues:

Buddhism also plays a part. All schools of Buddhism in the author's time held to the doctrine of emptiness or the void . . . existence is insubstantial, unreal.³³

(c) *Existence, Freedom and Choice*. The third existentialist issue MacIntyre discusses is that of being and absurdity, but this is inextricably connected to the issue of freedom and choice.³⁴ Is a person that which has consciousness and freedom and exists for himself or herself, or are persons simply pieces among the other pieces of furniture in the universe, merely existing? Are we of fixed natures which define and limit our choices? Or are we free and do the choices we make define our natures? Eleventh century Shintō philosophy seemed to entail that we are at one with nature, part of it and subject to its will. Eleventh century Buddhist philosophy seemed to entail that our fixed natures define and limit our choices, although that nature is much more complex, and the choices much more significant than many ordinary Japanese may have understood.

We should note that Ukifune is the heroine's appellation, not her name. Murasaki never names her. Ukifune is one self-description given by the character Murasaki refers to as "the woman," "the lady," etc. According to Miner, the author of the *Sarashina nikki*, a younger contemporary of Murasaki, Sugawara Takasue no Musume (b. 1008), is the earliest writer to refer to Murasaki's character

as “Ukifune,” a word which comes from a poem in *Genji*. Miner translates the poem, which was recited by the heroine:³⁵

Tachibana no	Leaves of the orange tree
kojima wa iro mo	may hold color on the little isle
kawaraji o	superior to change,
kono <i>ukifune</i> zo	but this boat loose in the current
yukue shiranenu.	does not know where she goes.

Ukifune then, is a loose, or floating boat. Miner claims that the name that is no name at all, Ukifune, is alive with significance.

Her “name” designates one of the kinds of boats met with in the poetry of the time. One is *yuku fune*, a boat going to an envisioned end, a kind contrary to hers. . . . Our Ukifune is by contrast loose, floating, adrift – a circumstance fraught with deep psychological, religious, and moral issues.³⁶

Her “name” as well as *Uji*, the name of the river where she is living when we meet her, are words related to the various connotations not only of *loose* (“loose woman,” “uprooted,” “floating” “drifting,”) but also of *misery*. We are prepared then, for Ukifune’s personal etymology to parallel that of her “name” and “name place.” We are prepared for this drifting woman of the river to go with the flow of her miserable destiny. *She* is not.

Ukifune rages against her destiny. At every turn, others urge her to temper her emotions, even to temper her attempts to analyze what she should do. Those urgings are always in fatalist terms: “it’s as Fate wills.”³⁷ Following the rape, Ukifune attempts suicide. Is it an attempt finally to exercise some control over her own life, at least over its ending? Or is it a way to instigate rebirth and reincarnation? But Ukifune does not succeed in her attempt. She is rescued by the monk Sōzu, against the advice of his disciples. But those whom she has left behind believe her to be dead.

Rather than rejoice in her unity with nature, rather than accept that life which the *kami* have set out for her, Ukifune attempts to escape it, first through suicide, then, by becoming a nun. But even here, others simply believe that destiny is at work. Sōzu explains that Ukifune’s survival and her recovery under his sister Imōto’s

care are due to *karma*, assisted both by Imōto's prayers to have her own dead daughter restored to her and by Ukifune's suicide attempt.

According to Earl Miner the consensus of Japanese scholars is that Murasaki's character "Sōzu" is based on Genshin Sōzu, an important interpreter of both Shingon and Tendai Buddhism, who wrote the three-volume *Ōjoyōshū* in 985 in Chinese, and who lived at Yokawa.³⁸ Whereas Ukifune had formerly identified herself with the river where she lived, her new location, Yokawa, the religious mountains, becomes the source of her concept of self. Whereas the river was flowing and murky and had unknown treacheries adrift and beneath its surface, the mountains are solid and unchanging and represent the heights which new, enlightened understanding can reach. But part of becoming enlightened involves understanding that she can control her own destiny. She can refuse to be confused by the murkiness of the river. Indeed, she can be a boat on the river, but this time with a destination – self-knowledge.

The working out of her existentialist dilemmas is not an academic exercise for Ukifune; indeed, she does not much address them in philosophic jargon. Like any existentialist, she experiences rather than merely considers them: she is bewildered by the gradual realization that she cannot locate herself within the conceptual framework of oriental philosophies – philosophies that provide the only conceptual framework she knows. She is pained by her objectification and seems not to exist in herself but only through and as the perceptions of others. And they see her solely in terms of their own needs. It is only through the exercise of choice, only through the pursuit of freedom (which she eventually defines as enlightenment) that she can exist for herself.

In important ways, Ukifune parallels Murasaki. There is diary evidence that Murasaki was a follower of the teachings of Genshin Sōzu's version of Pure Land Buddhism or "other-worldly Buddhism." That view can be easily distinguished from "this-worldly Buddhism" in that the latter was concerned with prosperity in this life and included elements of magic intended to secure that prosperity. Aristocrats who had been ruined by the Fujiwaras and even those Fujiwaras who were of the bureaucratic and lower courtier classes were more likely to be dissatisfied with what was possible in this world. Hence, Pure Land Buddhism would appeal to courtiers

like Murasaki. Moreover, those who believed in the Western Paradise might have attempted to bring it into this world, through the study of Jōdo scriptures. In Kato's words, ". . . some came to the doctrines of Jōdo Buddhism through weariness with this world and others through love of it."³⁹ Under Genshin Sōzu (941–1017), a monk would for 90 days without rest, continuously repeat the name of Amida Buddha and meditate on that deity:

The common people's acceptance of this world stemmed from the obvious conviction that at least it was better than Hell, while the aristocracy accepted this life in the belief that it was already rather like Paradise. It was no more than a small section of the middle and lower aristocracy who were able to accept easily the notion taught by Genshin that one could be reborn into the Western Paradise through repetition of the *Nembutsu* while believing in Amida's original vow. For the bulk of the higher aristocracy believing as they did that the Western Paradise was already here, so to speak, such concepts held no attraction.⁴⁰

This cursory examination of Genshin Sōzu's philosophy should be considered in light of a choice Murasaki herself contemplated exercising. In the diary which she probably wrote in 1009, some years after beginning *Genji* (and after chapters of the first two-thirds of it had been in circulation) but somewhat prior to writing the last third in which Ukifune is introduced, Murasaki says:

But then someone with as much to atone for as myself may not qualify for salvation; there are so many things that serve to remind one of the transgressions of a former existence. Ah the wretchedness of it all!⁴¹

Clearly, Murasaki does not know, at this writing, presumed to be the year 1009, what she seems to have come to believe (or what she has Ukifune exemplifying) by the time of the writing of the Ukifune chapters i.e., whether she can enter the Western Paradise. Earlier in the quoted passage from the diary she had said:

Now I shall be absolutely frank. I care little for what others say. I have decided to put my trust in Amitabha and immerse myself

in reading sūtras. You might expect me to have no compunction in becoming a nun, for I have lost what little attachment I retained for the trials and pains that life has to offer, and yet still I hesitate; even if I were to commit myself to turning my back on the world, there might still be moments of irresolution before he came for me, trailing clouds of glory.

And, in a wager worthy of Pascal, she says:

The time too is ripe. If I get much older my eyesight will surely weaken to the point that I shall be unable to read the sūtras, and my spirits will fail. It may seem that I am merely going through the motions of being a true believer, but I assure you that I can think of little else at the present moment.

Murasaki knows that if she makes the wager she has nothing to lose. Becoming a nun is the customary thing for a middle-aged female member of the lower aristocracy to do. Yet, she could not become a nun for conventional purposes. Murasaki wants to exercise choice and become a nun only because it is the only act she can conceive of which might influence the course of her destiny as a woman.

But will it be the right choice? If she follows the teachings of Genshin Sōzu, will she, a woman, be able to enter the Western Paradise without reincarnation as a man? If not, then, because she is a woman she would be damned anyway. If there is any way for women to enter the Western Paradise, *if Genshin Sōzu is correct about women*, then through such a program Murasaki may be able to atone for the sins of her former incarnations. By the time she completed the Ukifune chapters which comprise the last third of the book, Murasaki had reached her conclusion. It *was* worth wagering that women could enter the Western Paradise. Ukifune needed to become a nun in order to live contemplatively and hence, transcend this life. Murasaki concluded that in her own case, the philosophical life already provided the framework and discipline for contemplation. She wagered that for her, philosophy was a better route to that paradise than was the clerical life.

(d) *Anxiety, Dread and Death*. According to MacIntyre,

Kierkegaard argued that in certain psychologically defined moments truths about human nature are grasped. One such moment would be when we realize that we do not just fear specific objects but experience a generalized dread. . . . What is this . . . void we confront? . . . Sartre sees it as a confrontation with the fact of freedom, of our unmade future.⁴²

The very nature of existence, for Buddhists of Murasaki's era, was relation:

The Mahāyāna philosophers . . . advocated as follows: there is no real existence; all things are but appearance and are in truth empty, "devoid" of their own essence. Even non-existence is not reality; everything occurs conditioned by everything else. Voidness or emptiness is not nothingness nor annihilation, but that which stands right in the middle between affirmation and negation, existence and non-existence, eternity and annihilation. So "Voidness" means "relationality" of all things.⁴³

Ukifune comes to exist in part by stripping herself of her objectification by others. This has often been at the expense of relatedness to others. Referring to the early Ukifune, Miner says it is possible to specify existence,

. . . provided that it was assumed on the basis of dependence and interdependence, which is to say, relationship. . . . We conceive of Ukifune in relation to her serving women, her two half sisters, her lovers – just as her existence is necessary to theirs. This does not deny that she has a separable existence in our minds or that she is an agent. But it does define the special terms of her existence and agency.⁴⁴

But the later Ukifune eventually transcends existence in terms of relationships through which she was known in terms of specific others. Instead, in the solitude of the holy mountains, she seeks a void in which nothing exists, but through which all else is known. According to Nakamura:

The Doctrine of the void . . . is not nihilism. On the contrary, Mahāyāna Buddhists asserted that it is the true basis for the foundation of ethical values. There is nothing in the Void, but everything comes out of it. Cf. Mirror. The void is all-inclusive; having no opposite, there is nothing which it excludes or opposes. It is living void, because all forms come out of it, and whoever realizes the void is filled with life and power and the Bodhisattva's love . . . for all beings.⁴⁵

Ukifune struggles to exist in the void in this sense. She uses Buddhism to transcend, to become. Ukifune becomes the fisherwoman-nun, returning to the mountain village. She learns that she can refuse to acknowledge a man who objectifies her and sees her only in terms of himself. This refusal to see him who cannot see her for herself helps her to see herself more clearly. She can take charge of her life and her destiny, and the more she takes charge, the easier taking charge becomes. The easier it becomes, the more delightful the experience, and the more delightful the experience, the more worthwhile taking charge becomes.

(e) *The Absurd*. The idea of the absurdity of human existence and endeavor, that there is no explanation of why things are as they are and not otherwise – appears in Murasaki also. The explanation, that things are as they are due to *karma*, is invoked as a kind of rejoinder to Ukifune's struggles towards existence, self-determination and enlightenment. We recall a younger sister discussing Uki-fune:

Perhaps her worst misfortune, poor soul, is to have been born a woman at all, for we none of us, high or low, seem to be given much of a chance either in this world or the next.⁴⁶

Tendai Buddhism did not allow women passage to the Western Paradise without an intervening rebirth as a man. Had Ukifune completed her suicide, and been reborn as a man, she could, on Tendai principles, have been an important step closer to her destiny of complete enlightenment. But it would have been a technical step only. Her spirit would have been reborn the requisite gender, but with no improvement in its moral virtue or in its capacity for truth.

In some fundamental sense, then, it is absurd that Buddhist philosophy, the source of her existentialist quest for meaning, should, on the one hand, be a conceptual framework within which she did not meaningfully exist and, on the other hand, provide the framework within which she seeks (and presumably finds) enlightenment and self. If we look closely at the Ukifune story, this is precisely what happens.

When Sōzu goes to rescue Ukifune, the other monks urged him not to risk his reputation over the fate of one woman. Sōzu replies that Buddha would surely save the life of even one woman. One important way in which the historical Genshin Sōzu's version of Buddhism differed from the prevailing view is that it included an acceptance of women.⁴⁷ This view formed a small part of the historical Genshin Sōzu's philosophy, but for Murasaki, it marked a significant transition from the traditional Tendai principles. Tendai had absurd consequences for women, and Murasaki knew this. Jōdo, as interpreted by Genshin Sōzu, did not. And Sōzu's philosophy according to Kato, appealed to only a small portion of the aristocracy. Murasaki's *Genji* was immensely popular among them.

The absurdity of Tendai Buddhism for women is exemplified by Ukifune. She follows the four tenets of Buddhism in her search for existence and identity. She knows all too well the truth of Buddhism's first tenet, that suffering is a characteristic of human experience. Suffering not only characterizes Ukifune's experience, but, in some way or another, that of everyone she knows. She also holds no quarrel with Buddhism's second tenet, that desire and possession of what is desirable causes all suffering. Her attraction to Prince Niou is preceded by a life of desire: for legitimacy, for rank, for a real place in her family, for identity. She does not consent to sexual intercourse with Niou but, she believes, with Kaoru, to whom she has a commitment. What her failed suicide and the subsequent time in the holy mountains teach her is the truth of Buddhism's third tenet: by ceasing all desire, one can cease all suffering. She learns to stop desiring the trappings that come from associations with men of power and wealth. She becomes the fisherwoman-nun, often surviving on the charity of others. We leave her in the progress of living Buddhism's fourth tenet, that one can end all desire by adopting the right dispositions, virtues and conduct toward others, and, by adopting a life-long program of

meditation and contemplation. This is what she embarks on in the holy mountains. As a nun, she will spend much of her time in religious observances, in meditation and introspection.

But this is an absurd path to take for a woman to whom Tendai closes the doors to the Western Paradise. Ultimately, Ukifune's life becomes a response to the first existentialist issue. Through a philosophical system, Sōzu's version of Jōdo, we witness the individual, Ukifune, beginning the process of self-identification. We leave Ukifune seeking the enlightenment that is the void. And we witness her acquiring self-knowledge and identity. Genshin Sōzu explicitly claimed that the void includes women. According to Mahāyāna Buddhism⁴⁸ the concept of everything, including Ukifune's self-concept, is in the void. And she is related to all else. But the relatedness we now see is markedly different from that which marked her presacerdotal life. She is not now defined in terms of specific individuals, but in terms of all else that is, just as she now in part defines all else. She is part of the universe: what she does affects all else. Whereas, in her former life she was diminished and destined by her relationships to others, in her enlightenment she understands how she is enriched and freed precisely because she is part of all else and can affect all else.

What is true of Ukifune is true of Murasaki. Ukifune's story answers the query Murasaki posed years earlier in her own diary: is it worth wagering that a woman can affect her own *karma*?⁴⁹ It is worth it because both failing to wager and wagering mistakenly have identical consequences – exclusion from the Western Paradise. Ukifune's story shows that the wager was sound. Murasaki shows Ukifune approaching enlightenment. A woman *can* effectively influence her own destiny. She *can* come to have an identity of her own; she *can* transcend the suffering and desire of “this-worldliness” through the practice of “other-worldliness.” Through meditation, through contemplation, through philosophizing about her place in philosophical systems, even a woman can change her *karma* and reach *nirvāna*. Whether she needs to become a nun, like Ukifune, or can remain in the world, like Murasaki, depends in part upon her ability to live an analytical, introspective and contemplative life in an environment that was not designed for that purpose. Murasaki could live such a life amidst distractions. Ukifune required the cowl, the physical isolation, and the spiritual guidance and discipline of the religious life.

V. SUMMARY

It is important to consider the significance of Murasaki having a woman, Ukifune represent an important philosophical transition from doctrines of predestination, reincarnation, transmigration of souls and concomitant absence of individual freedom, to a relatively new philosophical concept, that of the ability of individuals whom the society did not generally consider to be persons in the moral sense to influence *karma* and achieve salvation. Ordinary men, with their greater control over their daily lives, had less need to appeal to some obscure aspect of an emerging sect's interpretation of the prevailing Buddhist doctrines in order to achieve a sense of self. That was given to them through the social structure, simply by virtue of their being men. In sharp contrast, some women, lacking the ordinary, day-to-day freedom of men and the social ability to define and determine their own lives, experienced (however vaguely) the kinds of existentialist dilemmas that were usually only experienced by philosopher-priests.

What is significant about Murasaki, is that she takes Genshin Sōzu's suggestion a step further. The character Sōzu claims that Buddha will save a woman. But he stops short of saying that women can have entrance to Paradise without a subsequent reincarnation as a man. Murasaki's suggestion is that it is worthwhile for a woman to seek enlightenment and self-direction *while a woman*. The suggestion is, although Murasaki does not make this clear, that women can live lives which challenge the prevailing conceptual framework, and thereby challenge the doctrine of predestination. This is what Ukifune does, and she does it through conceiving of herself as having free will and moral responsibility for creating her own destiny. Yet, she does not stray too far from the Genshin Sōzu model. Ukifune, and by extension, Murasaki, are not content to wait until they have been reincarnated as males to begin the long process of becoming enlightened. For them, the process starts now, in this life. And it begins with philosophical introspection and understanding of what is perhaps the world's best known system of philosophy.

NOTES

Where Japanese authors use the traditional name form no comma appears between surname and given name. Those authors adopting western usage are listed surname first with a comma between surname and given name.

1. Grant, Francis *Oriental Philosophy*, New York: Dial (1938 reprint of 1936 edition) p. 166.
2. Grant, *op. cit.*, 166.
3. Sakamaki Shunzō, "Shintō: Japanese Ethnocentrism," in Moore, Charles A., editor, *The Japanese Mind, Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, University of Hawaii Press, (1967), p. 24.
4. Sakamaki, *loc. cit.* quoting the scholar Motoori Norinaga notes that the term *kami* applied to that which is to be dreaded and revered, and includes physical as well as spiritual entities.
5. Grant, 172–173.
6. Miyamoto Shōson, "Relation of Philosophical Theory to Practical Affairs in Japan," in Moore, Charles, A., editor, *The Japanese Mind, Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture*. Honolulu: East-West Center Press, University of Hawaii Press, (1967), p. 5–6.
7. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 166., Sakamaki, *ibid.*
8. Sakamaki, *op. cit.*, p. 25, citing Norinaga.
9. I wish to thank Professor Ayako Hasebe Taneda for this point. Personal communication, May, 1984.
10. McCullough, William A. "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (1967) no. 27.
11. Haruo Shirane, "The Uju Chapters and the Denial of Romance," *Ukifune: Love in The Tale of Genji*, Andrew Pekarik, editor, New York: Columbia University Press (1982), p. 117.
12. Bowring, Richard *Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press (1982), p. 12.
13. Suyematz Kenchio, transl., *Genji Monogatari*, second edition, revised. Yokohama, Tokyo and Osaka: Z.P. Maruya & Co., Ltd., 1881, p. x.
14. Bowring, *op. cit.* p. 7.
15. *ibid*
16. *Introduction to Classic Japanese Literature*, Kokusai Bunka Shinkoka edition, Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkoka (1948), p. 77.
17. *ibid*
18. Jōtō-Mon'in Shōshi is Fujiwara no Shōshi, sometimes also referred to as Fujiwara no Akiko. See Bowring, *op. cit.*, index.
19. Bowring, *op. cit.*, p. 50 ff.
20. Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*, Arthur Waley trans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936, p. ix, n. 2, hereinafter as *Genji*. Cf. Miner, Earl, Odagiri, Hiroko, and Morrell, Robert E. *The Princeton Companion to Clas-*

- sical Japanese Literature* Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985, p. 203.
21. The female author of *Sarashina Nikki* was also of the Fujiwara clan, and of a literary family.
 22. Personal communication.
 23. Fujiwara No Teika, *Meigetsuki*, Nanba Hiroshi, ed., *Murasaki Shikibu shū no Kenkyū: Kōihen, denpon kenkyūhen*, Kasama Sōsho 31 (1972).
 24. Miner, Odagin, Morrell, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Mumyōzōshi."
 25. *op. cit.* s.v. "Murasaki."
 26. I owe this observation to Professor Taneda. Cf. Kato, Shuichi, *A History of Japanese Literature: The First Thousand Years*, David Chibbett, translator. London: The Macmillan Press (1979), 139 ff.
 27. *op. cit.*, p. 24.
 28. Miner, Earl, "The Heroine: Identity, Recurrence, Destiny," in *Ukifune: Love in The Tale of Genji*. Andrew Pekarik, editor. New York: Columbia University Press (1982), p. 63.
 29. Personal communication.
 30. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Volume 3. New York and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1972 reprint of 1967 edition, s.v. "existentialism."
 31. *op. cit.*, 148.
 32. Nakamura Hajime, "Consciousness of the Individual and the Universal Among the Japanese." In Charles A. Moore, ed., *The Japanese Mind; Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture*. p. 179 ff.
 33. *op. cit.*, p. 63–64.
 34. *loc. cit.*
 35. *op. cit.*, p. 65.
 36. *op. cit.*, p. 65.
 37. Murasaki, *Genji*, p. 1033.
 38. *op. cit.*, p. 79.
 39. Kato, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
 40. Kato, *op. cit.*, p. 148.
 41. Bowring, *op. cit.* p. 139.
 42. *op. cit.*, p. 149.
 43. Nakamura Hajime, *A History of the Development of Japanese Thought*, Volume 1, A.D. 592–1868., p. 43. Hereinafter as *History*.
 44. Miner, *op. cit.* p. 64.
 45. Nakamura, *History*, p. 44.
 46. Murasaki, *Genji*, p. 973.
 47. Bowring, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
 48. Nakamura, *History*, *loc. cit.*
 49. Bowring, *loc. cit.*

2. Hildegard of Bingen

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It is problematic to refer to Hildegard of Bingen as a philosopher, even though she was familiar with the philosophical currents of her time and could animatedly and competently take a stand on them. More appropriately, one could call her a theologian, even though she would be loath to claim such authority for herself, in regard to her writing. Her works, including the letters, function to a large extent as visionary literature, and it is not by chance that she, as a woman, chooses these stylistic means. Within her visionary experience, she comes to a philosophical-theological view of the world which displays original traits and sometimes emphasizes polemical aspects, but, in addition, raises many unanswered questions about the influences affecting a 12th-century Benedictine woman's view of the world and of mankind.

I. BIOGRAPHY

According to the research of the Eibingen Benedictines Marianna Schrader and Adelgundis Führkötter, Hildegard was born in Bermersheim near Alzey in 1098, to the nobleman Hildebert von Bermersheim and his wife Mechthild, as the tenth and last child.¹ We have an autobiographical sketch which is cited by the two monks Gottfried and Theoderich in their *Vita sanctae Hildegardis* [*Life of St. Hildegard*],² shortly after her death. According to this, Hildegard saw light phenomena as early as the age of three, even before she could express herself about it, and all during her childhood she had visionary impressions; these, however, she stored away in the depths of her soul, because she realized that she

retained her external sense of sight as well, and that those around her did not share her inner vision. As early as the first conversations with her nurse, Hildegard knew that she was different from those around her; at first, this was more unsettling than strengthening to her, as she was not yet able to justify her visionary gift with her calling, as she would as an adult. As was quite common at that time, Hildegard – the tenth child – was brought by her parents to God as a “tithe” and determined for a life in the Order. It appears never to have caused her problems to accept the decision of her parents. At the age of eight, Hildegard, along with another girl of the same age, was entrusted to the recluse Jutta of Spanheim, who lived, following the Benedictine Rule, in a women’s hermitage on the Disibodenberg [Mt. Disibod], in the shadow of the monastery there, and who, as *magistra*, taught the girls – more soon came – and prepared them for their future lives at the order. The Disibodenberg, where Hildegard spent the formative years of her life, is bordered by the rivers Nahe and Glan and offers a view of the landscape which cannot have remained without influence on Hildegard’s concept of nature. She was able to write about the types of fish native to these rivers in a manner that remained applicable into the 19th century.

Hildegard, who not without a certain intent would later often refer to herself as an uneducated woman, without a doubt received elementary instruction in the Latin language and in readings of the Vulgate Bible as well as of the Church Fathers. Besides Jutta of Spanheim, her teachers include her future secretary, Volmar of Disibodenberg. Likewise, the Benedictine monastery for men – which also possessed a library – in general could have offered the inhabitants of the women’s hermitage numerous opportunities for educational stimulation.

Around 1113–14, Hildegard received the veil from Bishop Otto of Bamberg and took the vows of the Order, at an age which by today’s standards seems quite young, but which corresponded to the age for marriage for girls at that time. We know relatively little about the next two decades of her life. As a young Benedictine nun, Hildegard’s life would have been shaped by the liturgy and Benedictine *Stundengebet* (prayer of the liturgical hours), and also by practical activities in the botanical garden. By the custom of Benedictine *Tischlesung* (the custom of monasteries and convents to read from the Church Fathers during the meals), numerous influen-

ces from (eastern?) patristics may have flowed to her as well. Evidence of this is accessible to modern historical research only with great difficulty.

The year 1136 was a turning point in Hildegard's life. That year, Jutta of Spanheim died and Hildegard was chosen as *magistra* by the community of women which had by then increased in size. Now she herself was responsible for instructing her young colleagues in the seven liberal arts, for choosing the readings from the Bible and from the works of the Church Fathers, and, for organizing liturgical singing in the convent.

Hildegard's literary activity begins in the year 1141, with the first work of her visionary trilogy, the *Liber Scivias*, on which she worked for a decade. The nun Richardis of Stade, who later – against Hildegard's will – accepted an appointment as abbess in the diocese of Bremen (and died soon thereafter) was Hildegard's first secretary.³ In 1147–48 at the Synod of Trier, the pupil of Bernard of Clairvaux, Pope Eugene III, had that part of Hildegard's first visionary work which had been written by then, examined. In the name of the assembled bishops, the Pope gave her encouragement to continue with her writing.

In the midst of working on this text, however, came the separation of Hildegard's convent from the Benedictine abbey for men on the Disibodenberg. Against the opposition of the monks, between 1147 and 1152 she accomplished the construction of her convent on the Rupertsberg near Bingen [Mt. Rupert]. At first the nuns there scraped along in such great material need that some of them left the convent. Not until 1158 did Hildegard reach a satisfactory settlement with the monks on the Disibodenberg, who had at first refused to hand over the dowries of the nuns.⁴ In this difficult conflict Hildegard demonstrated strength and awareness of the law such that today one would be tempted to view the move to autonomy of her convent as a sort of emancipatory movement. Certainly Hildegard's founding of a convent on the Rupertsberg shows traits of such a movement. Nevertheless, one must take into account many motives, which we today can understand only with difficulty. Not in the least she may have been motivated by a conflict between the nobles living in the area on the Nahe river and those who felt bound to the ever-encroaching diocese of Mainz. It is suspected that the nobility of the land on the Nahe was no longer willing to support

the convent on the Disibodenberg, which was bound to the diocese of Mainz and to the nobility who supported this diocese with the dowries of their daughters. In addition, differing views on the reforms of Cluny or other types of reform could have played a role in Hildegard's decision in favor of independence for her convent. All these events indicate how greatly she must have struggled with the trends of the time.⁵

In the 1150s Hildegard wrote her works on the natural and medical sciences, through which she became significant for European medical history. This work brought her the title of "first German woman physician." But in considering this, one must be aware that pharmaceuticals and medical treatment quite generally were the province of women, and that Hildegard, by writing down her system, simply became known to a higher degree than did many women of the Middle Ages who only passed on their knowledge of nature verbally, perhaps basing this on the pre-Christian, Germanic tradition.

Between 1158 and 1163, Hildegard worked on the second volume of her trilogy, the *Liber vitae meritorum* [*Book of the Merits of Life*]. But this, too, was a time of great activity in areas in addition to writing. Around 1160, Hildegard undertook her first major preaching tour, to Mainz, Wertheim, Würzburg, Kitzingen, Ebrach, and Bamberg. She made another trip to Trier, Metz, and Lorraine.⁶ In 1163, Hildegard was successful in obtaining for her convent on the Rupertsberg, a letter of safe conduct from Emperor Barbarossa, through which the convent escaped the sad fate of many other convents, which were destroyed in the numerous feuds of that time.

The founding of Hildegard's second convent, in Eibingen near Rüdesheim, took place in 1165. This great task coincides with Hildegard's work on the third volume of her trilogy, the *Liber divinorum operum* [*Book of Divine Works*], or *De operatione Dei* [*On the Workings of God*], on which she worked between 1163 and 1173. Since the nuns of Hildegard's convent were daughters of families of the nobility, one assumes that the founding of Hildegard's second convent was intended to enable girls from less privileged families as well, to lead lives according to the Rule of St. Benedict. This assumption is supported by the names of the first nuns of Eibingen, which have been passed down, and which in-

dicare, almost without exception, a non-aristocratic background. As abbess, Hildegard was director of both convents.⁷

Hildegard's third preaching tour – this time on a ship – in 1163 had great significance. On this trip she went to Boppard, Andernach, Siegburg, Cologne, and Werden/Ruhr. In particular, the stopover in Cologne was important because there Hildegard confronted the problem of the Catharists. Hildegard's last preaching tour took her to Maulbronn, Hirsau, Kirchheim, and Zwiefalten. With these trips, she clearly exceeded the role of woman and especially that of a nun, a woman of the convent; she also exceeded the Benedictine *stabilitas loci*. All this was possible because Hildegard was even during her lifetime, viewed as a prophet, not primarily in the sense of predicting the future, but rather in the sense of interpretation of her own time. Thus, in the *Vita* by the monks Gottfried and Theoderich as well, she is compared to the Old Testament judge and prophetess Deborah, and portrayed as the corresponding figure to her in the Christian era. She died, after a lifetime of infirmity and serious illness, in her convent on the Rupertsberg in 1179.

II. WORKS

Since the research on Hildegard began, toward the end of the last century, primarily historians and researchers of mysticism have turned to her works. Philosophical-historical works on Hildegard of Bingen remain in the minority until today. Nevertheless, Alois Dempf⁸ made a notable attempt at understanding Hildegard within the framework of contemporary trends in the philosophy of history. According to Dempf, Hildegard belongs – along with Hugh of St. Victor, Rupert of Deutz, Gerhoh of Reichersberg, and Otto of Freising – to German historical symbolism. This was a philosophical-historical movement, which, according to the idea of the *concordantia Veteris et Novi Testamenti* [concordance of the Old and New Testament] separated all of pre-Christian and Christian history into corresponding epochs and which revealed numerous symbolic-typological connections between them. This historical-philosophical movement culminated with Joachim of Fiore. Dempf, in contrast to many other male researchers who ascribe male characteris-

tics to Hildegard, speaks of her “self-confident womanhood;” he has understood her better than have many specialists in mysticism. If he characterized her trilogy of visionary works as a “system of visions,” then it is only because he has recognized that, when speaking of Hildegard, one cannot speak of pure seeing, since her visions are thought out to the minutest detail; indeed, they are sometimes even calculated.

This historical-philosophical orientation, according to which all history is essentially history of salvation, as well as Hildegard’s assertions of a non-ecstatic type of vision, have even led to a reluctance to count her writing as mysticism.⁹ At this point, one must remember that no valid conclusions about Hildegard’s way of writing can be drawn if one does not keep in mind that she is writing as a woman. Because women’s teaching is prohibited in the later scriptures of the New Testament (especially 1 Timothy 2:9ff),¹⁰ the idea that a woman of the Middle Ages would claim theological-philosophical teaching authority for herself was excluded. Whenever medieval scholastics write about this question, they consistently ascribe to women teaching competence only in the private, not the public, sphere, to instruct only close associates in the faith.¹¹ Since this was more than familiar to medieval women who wrote, they had to avoid, at all costs, the appearance of attributing to themselves any philosophical-theological teaching authority. Therefore, they sought another opportunity for contributing their opinions to the hotly-discussed questions of their time, and found it within the framework of mystical writing. For legitimizing at all, the prophetic voice of women and their criticism of current issues (in the form of criticism of social questions and of the Church), was possible only from the visionary-mystical realm.

Hildegard’s three great visionary works have the same division: (1) Description of what was seen, using words of personal emotion; and (2) Interpretation of the vision being discussed. Vision and interpretation alternate with each other. Hildegard takes pains, however, to conceal the subjective element even in the interpretation of her visions, by portraying the interpretation as the audition of the word of God. In fact, though, she here accommodates her own views and positions.

1. *Liber Scivias*

In regard to Hildegard, there are numerous visions, resembling each other, of divine commands for her to work; these are based on the visions of the Old Testament prophets being called to service. Just as Jeremiah (Chap. 1), for example, cites his youthfulness as evidence of his weakness in order to avoid God's charge, which he perceived as a burden and a load, so Hildegard makes use of her womanhood at the beginning of the second book of *Scivias*. But in both cases, it turns out that God chooses the weak who does not remain weak. Hildegard hears the voice of God speaking to her:

O you who are miserable earth and have the name of a woman, you have not been taught any of the doctrines of the fleshly masters by collecting your knowledge from the intelligence of the philosophers. You only have been touched by my light inwardly. My fire burns like the sun. Cry aloud and explain and write these mysteries of mine which you see and hear in this mystical vision. Do not be timid. Speak these things which you understand in the spirit so that I may speak these things through you.¹²

Hildegard, who read scriptures in Latin and who could even preach in Latin, portrays herself here as a prophetess appointed by God, who received what she had to say not from the "fleshly" education of human knowledge, but rather through "spiritual" illumination. Thereby is she – who cannot compete with the better-educated male members of the Benedictine Order of her time and who, as a woman, cannot lay claim to any teaching authority either – once again not comparable to these people by means of the superiority of her spiritual illumination. One sees this again and again in Hildegard's self-characterizations that female formulas of humility and the theme of womanhood as a weakness can also be an expression of a strong self-confidence. Not only Hildegard, but also other women of the Middle Ages use the negative portrayal of women of most contemporary [male] philosophers and theologians, in order to reverse it in the sense of the Biblical truth that God chooses exactly the (socially) weak and not those whom the world regards with esteem, in order to speak to the people through them.

Both the Old and the New Testament certify that there were female prophets. It was therefore possible for women of the Middle Ages to go beyond all hierarchies of male succession of appointment, and, on the basis of the prophetic calling which they claimed for themselves, to speak to the problems of the time. By virtue of their prophecy, women could criticize the state and the church, even those in the highest positions of authority. Whom should it surprise, then, when Hildegard considers her literary education as less important, and portrays herself as an uneducated prophetess who lives and speaks from spiritual illumination?

Hildegard's body of work remains completely within the framework of monastic spirituality, which is influenced by the Latin language of the liturgy, and by the Vulgate Bible, as well as by the Benedictine *Stundengebet* (prayer of the liturgical hours). Hildegard's teacher and secretary, the Benedictine monk Volmar of Disibodenberg, is responsible for grammatical and linguistic corrections, though not for changes in content. He is pictured in the first illustration of Hildegard's work *Scivias* in the illuminated Rupertsberg Codex, whereas she herself, whose eyes and ears are being reached by the flame of divine inspiration, is portrayed sitting in the middle, with stylus and slate in hand. Since the illustrations in this codex were made during Hildegard's lifetime¹³ in the *scriptorium* of her convent on the Rupertsberg, one may assume that she herself wrote and by no means merely dictated her works.

Scivias has always been Hildegard's best-known work. Its six visions of the first book, seven of the second, and thirteen of the third, follow the history of God's Creation, from the creation of the cosmos up through the eschaton. Although Hildegard could not have had any opportunity to view a Gothic cathedral with its numerous cycles of illustrations in the multicolored windows, one is reminded of these when reading Hildegard's visions, for she describes her visions so vividly, with all their nuances of color and numerous indications of size, that she surpasses the illustrations of the Rupertsberg Codex in precision, even when these illustrations are occasionally necessary as aids to understanding.

Scivias already produces, as do the later works, Hildegard's fundamental conviction of the mutual integration of Creation and the history of salvation. The correspondence of macro- and micro-cosmos, which is also elaborated by Hildegard's contemporaries, is,

in her work, clearly integrated into a point of view interested in the history of salvation. In the beginning, harmony of cosmic forces and elements was, according to Hildegard, disturbed by the Fall and must be reconstructed by the effect, which overflows into Nature, of Christ's role as savior.

In the vision of the universe (I, 3) in *Scivias*, Hildegard – as Dante after her – makes use of the Ptolemaic concept of the world. But she modified that concept through a motif arising from an originally female-determined mythology, the motif of the world as an egg. This concept, which is already found in ancient China and in the Cult of Mithras, can also be found in the contemporary school of Chartres.¹⁴ Hildegard's concept of the universe in the form of an egg is especially strong in the powers of development which were imparted to the Creation by God, as well as in thoughts of the loving security of God's work. The earth, mankind's abode, forms as the yolk of the egg, the fruitful center of the universe.¹⁵

In the interpretation of this vision, Hildegard sees in the teaming of the sun and the three upper planets not only the trinitarian structure of Creation indicated as mirror of the divine mystery, which is a common conception in the Christian philosophy of religion since patristics, but she finds here especially the cosmic reflection of the Word (*Logos*) – the sun of righteousness – becoming flesh. Hildegard research is of the opinion that she, along with her contemporary Rupert of Deutz, reveals the concept of the so called "Absolute Incarnation" which later on was further developed by the theology of the Franciscans and became well known through Scotus. It is the idea of God becoming man as completion and perfection of Creation, even if humankind had not sinned.¹⁶

In the continuation of the allegorical interpretation of the vision of the cosmos, generally portrayed as the word of God, Hildegard interprets the moon as symbol of the Church, particularly in its character of variability, of increase and decrease. As the moon is appointed always to ignite its glow from the sun, so the Church, which is always weighted down by unrest, persecution, or corruption, must take its refuge in Christ as the sun of righteousness and become strengthened by him. Accordingly, in the cosmic manifestation as well, humankind's Fall appears as an ominous mountain between the northern and eastern directions of the yolk-like globe. Therewith is manifested that man, even though provided by God

with the intellect as the “golden and purple crown”¹⁷ has, by misuse of freedom, disregarded his role of governing, a right given him by Creation, the creatures placed in order by the Creator. In Hildegard’s poetic definition of man, for whom visible corporeality is honorable, the affront to medieval manichaeism among the Catharists becomes just as clear as overcoming an exaggerated Neoplatonism.²⁸ The interpretation of this vision ends with reflections on determination and freedom, in that Hildegard intensively polemicalizes against the contemporary mischief of astrology and calculation of constellations of death, and rejects all oracles predicting the future as ominous magical arts.

Further visions described and interpreted in *Scivias* uncover the course of history, whose goal is salvation, with different levels as described in the Old Testament. The course of history has a great turning point when the Son of God becomes flesh. Hildegard continues to trace history through the individual periods of the Church up to the apocalyptic portrayal of the end of the world. By Hildegard’s salvation-oriented historical perspective, we understand that she has an eye for the consequences of all human activity for or against God. In spite of all negative developments in particular epochs, humankind approaches the ultimate goal of glorification of Creation. Given this analysis of her historical perspective, Hildegard’s interpretation of history in *Scivias* can be characterized as simultaneously optimistic and realistic, precisely because of its strong criticism of the times and its constant warnings about corruptive human behaviors.

In the two great allegorical figures, the Synagogue, and the Church, *Ecclesia*, and also in the portrayal of a city with the most varied architectural elements,¹⁹ Hildegard sees the individual phases of the course of history. The use of feminine symbols such as the moon and the city, as well as of the larger-than-life female figures of Synagogue and Church, is significant in this regard. In the fifth vision of the first book of *Scivias* Hildegard sees the Synagogue, which shelters Abraham in her heart, Moses in her bosom, and the prophets of the Old Covenant in her womb. Abraham represents belief trusting in God, Moses represents God’s law planted in man, and the prophets represent the coming salvation. The lower portion of the figure of the Synagogue appears in dark colors, which hints at the abandonment of the covenant of God, her feet are of a

bloody red. Altogether, the figure of the Synagogue shows great similarity to the figure of the Church. This symbolizes the idea of the harmony of the Old and New Testaments. For Hildegard the Synagogue is the anticipation of *Ecclesia*, which foresaw God's hidden plans in shadowy realization. In the interpreting "word of God," the Synagogue is even characterized as "mother of the incarnate son of God." The blood-red feet of the Synagogue, which allude to murder of the prophets, are, however, surrounded by a pure cloud, which represents the clairvoyant belief of the last sons of the Synagogue, the Apostles, with whom she finds her end, and with whom *Ecclesia* begins her public influence. With the awakening of the Synagogue on Judgment Day, and her calling to true knowledge of God, Hildegard points to the final reconciliation of Judaism and Christianity, a truly ecumenical concept in the Middle Ages.

Between the vision of the Synagogue in the context of the Old Testament, and the series of visions of *Ecclesia*, stands Hildegard's vision of the Trinity, in which the symbol of the human form represents the eternal Word (II, 2).

Next I saw a very bright light, and inside it there was a human figure who was the color of a sapphire, completely surrounded by a very pleasant fire of reddish color. The very bright light completely surrounded this fire of reddish color, and at the same time this fire completely surrounded the light. Both the fire and the light surrounded the human figure, existing as one light with one force of potentiality. Then I heard the living light speak to me.²⁰

The illustration of this vision, which cannot render what is incomprehensible about the fire and light, shows two concentric circles of the two light phenomena and has the sapphire-blue human figure appearing before the inner of the two circles.²¹ The vision itself is fully dynamic and through constant movement signifies the pulsing life of the godly domain, to which spiritualized matter, through the Word becoming flesh, belongs as well. Hildegard's philosophical starting point in this vision lies – in addition to the high esteem of matter, showing anti-manichaeistic coloring – in the enrichment of the contemporary thought of Trinity analogies in the Creation. In the Middle Ages, so rich – according to the Augustinian model – in

Trinity analogies, Hildegard develops her original contribution, in that she sees at any given time three different powers in an object, for example, in fire illuminating clarity, purple power, and ardor, of which one cannot exist without the other two, or in the word sound, character, and aspiration (*sonus*, *virtus*, *flatus*), which allow the word to be heard, understood, and transmitted.

In a series of visions Hildegard sees the figure of the Church as the "new bride," which now takes the place the Synagogue had occupied, as a larger-than-life female.²² Her mothering function is described in analogy to the mystery of becoming flesh. In baptism she bears her children from the power of the Holy Spirit, as does Mary. This *Ecclesia* is perceived by Hildegard as the great waiting woman, who endures imperfection and corruption in her limbs as well as enmity and persecution, who travels through all chaos of time, and is grasped by it, without, however, being wounded in her sacramental structure. In a way, she guides humankind through the catastrophes of world history to the eschatological kingdom of God. As was the case with the Synagogue, Hildegard sees the lower portion of the figure of *Ecclesia* only unclearly, or, in threatening forms. This signifies the lack of knowledge of what is to come, as well as the decay and suffering of the end of the world. It seems that, with her vision of the ugly head which issues from the womb of *Ecclesia*, Hildegard acknowledges the contemporary tradition which allows the Antichrist to take his origin from the Church. Certainly this is a severe form of criticism of the Church.

Hildegard's view of history does not correspond to one of linear progression in the history of salvation. Times of prosperity and times of disaster alternate with each other in the Old Testament, just as in Christian history. She finds numerous typological correspondences between Old Testament and New Testament-Christian epochs of prosperity and disaster, such that her concept of history is most easily characterized as having a spiral form.²³ Toward the end of *Scivias*, as well as in her third visionary work, and in her *Life of St. Disibod*, Hildegard has made use of apocalyptic images in order to suggest authority figures or their characteristics (without naming names), as well as representatives of contemporary scholarship, for example, the hair-splitting of dialectics which she viewed as detrimental to the Church. Suspicions that Hildegard is thereby

referring to Abelard must come up empty-handed, as this man himself resisted the hyperdialecticians of his time just as strongly.²⁴

Concerning her own time, Hildegard speaks of the time of woman's debility in such connections, from which many Hildegard researchers have concluded that she is scornful of her own gender and places herself on a level equal to that of men, that is, apart from other women. But that is not so, for several reasons. For Hildegard understands the time of woman's debility as the recurrence of the guilt of Eve; therefore she names it as she does because of the typological correspondence, and not because she regards her own sex as inferior. In addition, those who make this time one of recurrence of the guilt of Eve are the unrightful bearers of power and authority, that is, men.²⁵ Moreover, the interruption of a time of disaster through a renewed time of peace, in which according to Hildegard, basing herself on Joel 3:1, men and women are made capable of prophecy, stands under the sign of woman, for this time corresponds to the birth of the Lord from the Virgin and preceeds his return as judge of the world. Only after this interim epoch does Hildegard see the empire and the papacy dwindle, and the people gathering themselves under divided religious authorities, before the Antichrist brings about the separation of spirits in the cosmic final battle. Not only the reconciliation with the Synagogue, but also the acceptance of a great portion of pagan peoples in the *Ecclesia*, is characteristic of Hildegard's eschatology. The new shine of the elements, purified by the victory of faith, freed from the shadow of human guilt, and the eternal cessation of cosmic movement, characterize the eschatological peace and completion.

Hildegard's apocalyptic-eschatological visions, in which she, corresponding to current custom, uses apocalyptic animal symbols for differentiation of individual segments of time, do not allow an unequivocal explication and amount to only a small portion of her collected works. Nevertheless, shortly after her death, they were separated from her collected works and given undue emphasis. Around 1220 the Prior Gebeno of Eberbach assembled apocalyptic themes from Hildegard's visions and letters under the title *Speculum futurorum temporum* [Mirror of future times] and thus started a centuries-long perception of Hildegard as prophetess of the future, whereas for Hildegard herself, the main thing was a complete view of the history of everything created.²⁶

2. *Liber Vitae Meritorum*

Hildegard's second visionary work is in the popular tradition of the Middle Ages of struggles between virtues and vices, which have their model in the work *Psychomachia* by the poet Prudentius (fourth century). Medieval ethics was inspired by this work and thus came to its multiply-varied system of vices and virtues. Hildegard's contribution to the contemporary ethics can of course appear in no form other than a visionary one. This gives her opportunity for an imaginative and original arrangement of the often-treated theme. Her use of animal symbols permits assuming knowledge of the ancient Christian *Physiologus*.

The vices, which must be overcome in the human soul again and again by the opposite virtues, appear in Hildegard's visions of the *Liber vitae meritorum* as combinations of different animal and human body parts. They are heard in an extremely vulgar language. The virtues, on the other hand, can only be heard as contradictions to the vices. The scenarios of the visions are of a cosmic type: a larger-than-life male human figure, probably in accord with Isaiah 42:13, symbolizes God or Christ. However, the last word on Hildegard's concept of God has not yet been said. This figure, in the course of the visions, revolves around the four quarters of the heavens. The feet are standing in the water of the abyss, and the head projects up into the ether. The fiery cloud of the virtues flashes from the mouth of the figure. Virtues are perceived individually only through hearing, and it is only through the words of the virtues that vices do not remain unanswered. In this dramatized form of the visions Hildegard comes to the following diagram of virtues and vices.

1. Amor saeculi (love of the world)	Amor caelestis (love of the heavenly)
2. Petulantia (wantonness)	Disciplina (training)
3. Joculatrix (love of pleasure)	Verecundia (sense of shame)
4. Obduratio (hard-heartedness)	Misericordia (compassion)
5. Ignavia (cowardice)	Divina victoria (victory of God)
6. Ira (anger)	Patientia (patience)
7. Inepta laetitia (excess)	Gemitus ad Deum (longing for God)
8. Ingluvies ventri (gluttony)	Abstinencia (abstinence)
9. Acerbitas (harshness)	Vera largitas (generosity)
10. Impietas (impiety)	Pietas (piety)
11. Fallacitas (deceit)	Veritas (truth)

12. Contentio (contentiousness)	Pax (peace)
13. Infelicitas (melancholy)	Beatitudo (blessedness)
14. Immoderatio (immoderation)	Discretio (moderation)
15. Perditio animarum (stubbornness)	Salvatio animarum (salvation of the soul)
16. Superbia (arrogance)	Humilitas (humility)
17. Invidia (envy)	Charitas (charity)
18. Inanis gloria (ambition)	Timor Domini (fear of God)
19. Inobedientia (disobedience)	Obedientia (obedience)
20. Infidelitas (faithlessness)	Fides (faith)
21. Desperatio (despair)	Spes (hope)
22. Luxuria (debauchery)	Castitas (chastity)
23. Injustitia (injustice)	Justitia (justice)
24. Torpor (dullness)	Fortitudo (bravery)
25. Oblivio (forgetfulness)	Sanctitas (sanctity)
26. Inconstantia (inconstancy)	Constantia (constancy)
27. Cura terrenorum (concern for earthly matters)	Caeleste desiderium (longing for the heavenly)
28. Obstinatio (obstinance)	Compunctio cordis (contrition)
29. Cupiditas (greed)	Contemptus mundi (contempt for the World)
30. Discordia (discord)	Concordia (concord)
31. Scurrilitas (buffoonery)	Reverentia (reverence)
32. Vagatio (instability)	Stabilitas (stability)
33. Maleficium (magical art)	Cultus Dei (service of God)
34. Avaritia (avarice)	Sufficientia (contentedness)
35. Tristitia saeculi (world-weariness)	Coeleste gaudium (heavenly joy) ²⁷

A comparison with medieval books of penitence, as well as with treatises on ethics of early Scholasticism, shows how abundantly and contrastingly Hildegard's ethical thinking is planned, although one must say that not only this second visionary writing, but all of Hildegard's works are of an ethical nature, and describe the responsibility of man in its cosmic consequences. From the viewpoint of eco-ethics, much can be learned from Hildegard, although, because of the many changes in the concept of the world between Hildegard's century and our own, it is difficult to transfer her perceptions to a world view informed by modern science.

In order to illustrate Hildegard's imaginative description of the vices, consider her portrayal of *Immoderatio*, as it is put in its place by *Discretio*, which she considers an especially important virtue:

This one is just like a wolf because in the furor of guile and in fiery vicissitude of all evils, she is without distinction. Having flexed her legs, she lies upon her feet looking in all directions, in such a way that anything she is able to snatch away, she would devour. By the inclination of her vigour, she tends to all things of inferior quality, walking on the worst ways of her peculiar will. She takes all things empty into consideration.²⁸

According to Hildegard, the virtue *Discretio* is opposed to this vice. *Discretio* is the virtue of discerning spirits, and of keeping within appropriate bounds. *Discretio* belongs to the image of God in man as the power to differentiate between Good and Evil. That power is at the same time, however, seen by her as a virtue of reason and of the will. Hildegard also uses symbols such as the eye and light to represent *Discretio*, and assigns them to the second day of Creation. By that she means the ability, imparted to man from nature, to observe structures and measures or proportions of the cosmos, and to bring them to completion by his action in spiritual freedom.²⁹ But in such contexts Hildegard also discusses the power of the Holy Spirit. Hildegard does not say where the transition is between *Discretio* as a virtue of reason and the mind, and *Discretio* as a mode of action of the Holy Spirit in man. She does not say this regarding any virtue. Virtue, and the action of the Holy Spirit in man are in such unity for her, that their connection cannot be analyzed more closely.

Another very imaginatively described vice in the *Liber vitae meritorum* is *Luxuria*, whose loose talk *Castitas* does not fail to counter:

. . . it had – so to say – the form of a woman, and she lay over on her right side with her legs drawn up curving toward herself, just like somebody who reclines in bed. Moreover, her hairs are as flames of fire, and her eyes are white, . . . and she had white shoes on her feet, which were so slippery that neither was she able to walk, nor to stand on them. And from her mouth a certain vapour and a very poisonous spit flowed out, and at her right breast she gave suck to something like the offspring of a dog, and at her left, indeed, something like a viper. And with her hands she plucked the flowers of trees and of grasses and took their odor

into her nostrils. She also did not have any other clothes, but was fiery all over, and just as hay is dried so were all things close to her.³⁰

In this portrayal the especially conspicuous ambiguity of Hildegard's language of symbols, metaphors, and allegories in her second visionary work becomes clear. Whereas white and the color of fire are otherwise predominantly of positive significance, here, in order to make this recognizable as a perversion of the good, they characterize a form of decay.

In addition to establishing this widespread catalogue of virtues and vices, in this work, Hildegard gives us insight into the medieval practice of penitence, when she names those penitential works which are necessary to avoid the punishments provided in the hereafter for the individual vices and mistakes. With her joy in nature, and in every living thing, all assaults on life are especially serious for her. Thus, she provides punishments and works of penitence not only for those who have committed murder, suicide, and abortion, but even for those who have killed in self-defense. Among Hildegard's "vices" are many – in line with general medieval custom – which we characterize today as emotional disturbances or even depression, for which the person can hardly be held morally responsible. Similarly, there is much among the "virtues" which would be equated with a cheerful frame of mind. To that extent, medieval thinking expands ethical responsibility much further than does modern thinking. Hildegard believes, however, that class distinction or age has nothing to do with how a person can endure in the battle of virtue and vice which takes place in the soul. Otherwise she would not so quickly have chosen the simple, modest young girl for the model of a happy soul pleasing to God, and as a symbol of virtues.

3. *Liber Divinorum Operum*

This work, entitled *De operatione Dei* in an important manuscript, contains on the one hand a revision of the visions of *Scivias* – from the perspectives of cosmology-theology of Creation, and philosophy of history and of nature, as well as of eschatology – based upon the mature viewpoint of the abbess, who often refers to her

earlier work, and explains in what points her view of the world has changed. On the other hand the macro- and microcosmic correspondences are expressly thematicized in a cohesive series of visions and offer the latest word in relation to the two other visionary writings. Here, Hildegard no longer follows the concept of the cosmos in the form of an egg, but rather, in circular form. The revolving wheel and the cross are the basic forms in Hildegard's visions in this late work. Hildegard repeatedly sees the human figure cross-like, with outstretched arms, in the middle of the cosmic wheel. "Just as the firmament is strengthened by the sun and the moon, so is man by the knowledge of good and evil turning him this way and that."³¹ The cosmic speculations of the European Middle Ages, among which those of Hildegard have special distinction, have many similarities to Taoism and Confucianism: the head of the figure corresponds to cosmic circles, the eyes to the stars, the ears to the air, the arms to the *latera mundi*, the heart to the earth, and the feet to the rivers. At the same time, however, one must consider that in the European Middle Ages, before the turning point of Copernicus, the position of the human being in the center of the universe had ambivalent meaning. For this central position is most distant from the Empyreum, as the domain of God's existence beyond confines of space.³² For comparison one need only think of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

For Hildegard, however, the cruciform shape of the cosmic human figure indicates the Christ-likeness of man, and therefore has a predominantly positive meaning in its position in the center of the universe. In her case as well, though, the ambivalence cannot be excluded; as at any given time she calls attention to the dangers of exceeding moderation, when man neglects the proper relationship between the cosmic measures and the proportions of his body. It is important, especially regarding parallels from Asia and from antiquity, that Hildegard places great value on emphasizing that she sees the world wheel with the human figure in it in front of the bosom of God.³³ The question of influences and of sources to whom Hildegard owes her macro- and microcosmic concepts has not yet even today been unequivocally clarified.³⁴ Although she constantly warns against magic, she seems to have allowed certain astrological elements from antiquity into her depiction of the cosmos. The christianization by Hildegard of antique concepts of the cosmos is, however, without question; as it has been completely thought

through, this harmonization of antique and Christian concepts is neither superficial nor forced.

Hildegard allows the length of the human figure appearing in the center of the cosmic wheel to be equal to its width with outstretched arms, and in this proportion it corresponds to the cosmos with its equality of width and length. This macro- and microcosmic equality of proportion is to be understood as expression of a totality and is interpreted by Hildegard as a warranty for the knowledge of discernment of Good and Evil (*discretio!*), thus as a guarantee of the viability of man in his world. This gift of the Creator, the *recta et distincta mensura*, is meted out to man, as Hildegard says, from the source of true love, in whose knowledge rests the course of the world.

As examples of correspondences of the proportions of man and cosmos Hildegard brings up, among others, the following: the sphere of the human head mirrors the curve of the cosmic wheel. The consequence for the human soul of this correspondence is that it "circumeunte rationalitate" arranges and orders each work of man, tracing, as it were, the form of head and of cosmos. As the head of man corresponds to the cosmic spheres with their elements and constellations, so the earth as the center of the cosmos corresponds, according to Hildegard, to the remaining limbs of the human body. She never tires of discovering new correspondences between the earth and the human body; these correspondences are difficult for us today to reconstruct. These correspondences in the material world are, however, only bases for intellectual-psychic and spiritual correspondences. Thus are equated, for example, the individual segments of the head (from the top of the skull to the brow, from the eyes to the tip of the nose, from the tip of the nose to the throat) – which are equivalent to each other – to the three outer elements of the cosmos, which likewise correspond to each other in their proportions. The three faculties of the soul which reflect this proportion, equivalent macro- and microcosmically, are for Hildegard *comprehensio*, *intelligentia*, and *motio*, which combine to a single strength and have mutual influence on each other.

Thus, if it were such that the spirit could comprehend more than it could understand or move, it would be in an unjust proportion.³⁵

An especially good example is Hildegard's interpretation of the parallel between the seven equidistant points on the human skull and forehead, and the equidistance in the sky of the planets, which she knew, as the macro- and microcosmic manifestation of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. For Hildegard, this correspondence guarantees that

the soul, . . . in the human body from the beginning of its works continuously to their end, must venerate the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit with equal zeal.³⁶

Only as a Christian interpreter does Hildegard see herself as capable of explaining the true meaning of the correspondences of world and man for her fellow human beings.

Man, who according to Hildegard, bears the proportions of the cosmos on his body, has by nature a rudimentary knowledge of the resulting spiritual powers and ethical rules, which, however, does not release him from further sensitizing himself throughout his life to this natural correspondence, through intensive study of the Books of Creation and Revelation. Hildegard finds in the cosmic processes much evidence for the sighing of the creature and its waiting for its share of the glory of the children of God, about which Paul writes (Romans 8:19–23). Her transposition of the history of salvation into the cosmic realm includes special anthropological emphases. Thus she by no means unequivocally assigns male gender to the person seen in the middle of the cosmic wheel. In her explication of the particular cosmic and corporeal zones, she expressly considers the differences of the male and female bodies. Even if a correspondence is seen between the human body consisting of four elements, and the four letter ADAM, which was often demonstrated in the twelfth century, this does not contradict an inclusive meaning of the cosmos-person in Hildegard, because she takes care to unite both sexes in male as well as female symbolic figures.³⁷

4. Writings on Nature

According to Heinrich Schipperges, only a single work of Hildegard's comes into question here, which bore the title *Liber sub-*

tilitatum diversarum naturarum creaturarum and which was not divided into two works, the *Liber simplicis medicinae*, known by the name of *Physica*, and the *Liber compositae medicinae*, known as *Causae et Curae*, until its transmission in manuscript form.³⁸ The first of these two partial works describes the beneficial and harmful powers, inherent in plants, elements (air, earth, sea, rivers, lakes), rocks, animals, and metals. The latter work has an anthropological-cosmological theme. From the point of view of pathology and therapy, Hildegard relies on the ancient doctrine of the temperaments and the pathology of the humors, when she ascribes illnesses to the surplus or deterioration of body fluids. This knowledge may have come to her through the great mediator of the culture of antiquity to the Middle Ages, Isidor of Seville. To this is added the local descriptions of the flora and fauna of the Nahe province, for which Hildegard was lacking Latin technical terminology, so she uses the contemporary German names and designations. Although Hildegard's works on natural history are not written in the style of a vision, she nevertheless proceeds from the same theology of Creation as in her three visionary writings. Many of Hildegard's instructions in natural healing have only historical interest; others were able to be verified scientifically in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some are up-to-the-minute even today. In addition to their value for natural history, these writings of Hildegard have the same significance of a philosophy of nature inspired by Christianity. In the preface to *Physica* we read:

In the creation of man from the earth, another earth was employed, which is man, and all the elements served him, because they understood he was alive, and they, at hand for all his conversations, worked with him, and he with them. And the earth gave its greenness, according to the character and nature and any kind of human behavior. This is because in its useful herbs the earth reveals the circumference of the spiritual abilities of man, as well as in its useless herbs the useless and diabolic abilities of man.³⁹

Hildegard evaluates nature according to her religious premises, that Creation was changed in essence for the worse through human-kind's Fall. But from that she differentiates certain domains, which have nearly completely preserved the original order.

Therefore, especially in these works, she would like to transmit the knowledge needed by every human being about nature, and to teach how to differentiate between natural and magical behavior in relationship to nature. Today, however, many historians of the natural sciences characterize Hildegard's own use of nature as largely magical. In so doing, they fail to recognize the religious sense, as Hildegard viewed it, of natural phenomena. She used natural phenomena as sacramentals, as one would express it today theologically. For, like her contemporary, Hugh of St. Victor, she sees the whole world governed by beneficial symbols and formulates prayers from the vocabulary of the Church liturgy, in which the forces of nature and salvation through Christ are allied with each other. But always she leaves it to God's will whether or not he wishes to allow the requested effect to come about in each individual case. An example from the book on stones in *Physcia*:

Concerning the jewel Jacinctus: The jewel rises from the fire on the first hour of the day, when the air has mild warmth . . . and somebody who experiences a darkness in his eyes, or rather whose eyes are dim . . . would hold the jewel to the sun, and immediately it remembers that it was born from the fire, and quickly it becomes warm: moisten it with a little spit, and thus place it on the eyes repeatedly, and the eyes will be clear and healthy. And if someone through magic words is *bezaubert*,⁴⁰ that he becomes insane, take warm wheat bread and divide the crust in the shape of a cross . . . and drag the jewel downward through the cleavage and say 'God, who took away all valuable stones from the devil, when his commandment was broken, from you (name of the person) all fantasies and all magic words should be taken away as well as the grief of madness.'⁴¹

The curse, like the blessing, is by all means a tangible reality for Hildegard, and she apparently used the natural phenomena, subordinated to the Creator through prayer like that of the sacramentals, in order to cancel out curses.

Among the earth's plants Hildegard names those that make the spirit happy, the intellect clear, that purify the heart and mind, that remove sadness of the soul and barrenness of the body; she also names those which by their beautiful scent drive out demons. She

recommends plants that impart a strong “virtus,” in the double meaning of power and virtue.⁴² Nature’s function as a mirror for the human being becomes especially clear in Hildegard’s theory of gemstones: In this precious domain of creation, through clarifying sight, man can see how he should really be. For in the colorful luminosity of the stones he finds expressed the spiritual clarity originally intended for him. But because of their quality of water and fire they are also a symbol of the Holy Spirit.⁴³

Hildegard sees the characterological quality of man reflected in the animal world and sometimes carries this to the point of grotesqueness. Here one can also suspect that she adapts charms from Germanic antiquity and christianizes them through insertion of the words “through the living God” [*per viventem Deum*], in the same way that many a pre-Christian tradition will continue to live in her knowledge of plants. Birds as symbols of the soaring power of human thoughts, the lion and similar animals as images of the human will, domestic animals as the mirror of human gentleness, these images all contain powers useful or detrimental to man, corresponding to the analogy between man and animal.

Hildegard’s work *Causae et curae* turns to the human body, its organs and functions. She writes about sexuality with such great candor that in the nineteenth century – when Hildegard research began – either her saintliness or the authenticity of this work was called into question because of this openness. Hildegard creates special euphemisms for the sexual organs and functions. In order to be able to understand these as such, though, one must be able to transplant oneself into the prevailing taste of the time and into contemporary medicine. Thus she writes the following about a certain type of male sexuality:

There are some men showing much virility, and they have strong and solid brains . . . And the color of their face is considerably ruddy, just as it appears in certain paintings, which are colored in a red hue . . . The wind also which is in their loins is more fiery than windy and it has two tents to its command, in which it blows as if into a chimney. And these tents surround the stem of all powers of man, and are helpers to it, just like little buildings placed next to a tower which they defend. Therefore, there are two, such that they would surround the stem, and they would

strengthen and direct it so that the more brave and allied, they would receive the aforementioned wind, and they would attract the wind and release it again, just like two bellows which blow into a fire. When likewise they erect the stem in its manliness, they hold it bravely, and thus at a later time the stem blossoms into a fruit.⁴⁴

Hildegard devotes similarly open descriptions to female sexuality in its various forms as well:

Moreover, pleasure in a woman is compared to the sun which caressingly, gently, and continuously fills the earth with its heat, so that it can bear fruits, since if it would heat the earth more harshly in its constancy, it would hurt the fruits more than it would produce them. And so pleasure in a woman caressingly and gently, but nevertheless continuously, would have heat so that she can conceive and produce fruit . . . For when pleasure surges forth in a woman, it is lighter in her than in a man.⁴⁵

Hildegard describes human sexuality here as if without qualification, although in all her writings she shares the contemporary view, based on the tradition of the Augustinian doctrine of concupiscence, that original sin is transmitted through the human act of reproduction. There is a gaping contradiction, which cannot be fully reconciled, between Hildegard's description of human sexuality as a force of nature and her tragic view of sexual desire.⁴⁶

5. *Other Works*

Evidence of Hildegard's activity in counseling, which she practiced throughout her life, but also of her concern for the well being of the women entrusted to her, is displayed in her correspondence. Among the addressees of her letters are the contemporary popes Eugene III, Anastasius IV, and Hadrian IV, as well as the emperor Barbarossa.⁴⁷ Anastasius had to accept Hildegard's sharp reproof because of his lax command, in which she dared to go so far as to make the assertion that Rome, through the failure of the pope, was on its last legs. She advised the emperor with sharp words of warning that seem to refer to his policies regarding Rome, and to

the extension of schism through nomination of further counter-popes. Hildegard's correspondence with male as well as female superiors in the Order deals with concrete individual problems, with the official duties of these persons, and with problems of church-unity. Her correspondence is also rich in philosophical-theological opinions and autobiographical documents, the latter especially in correspondence with Wibert (Guibert) of Gembloux, who later was to become her last secretary.

Explications of the Benedictine Rule, solutions to questions propounded to her on theological-philosophical issues, the lives of saints, explications of the gospels and of the Christian Creed: these are shorter writings, which over the course of centuries have consistently been attributed to Hildegard.⁴⁸ However, the third work of her visionary trilogy, *De operatione Dei*, was not rediscovered as a whole until the work of J.D. Mansi, the archbishop of Lucca (Lucca, 1761).⁴⁹ All these works underscore the philosophical-theological tendencies of the great writings of the abbess.

Among the poetic writings are the dramatized work *Ordo virtutum*, widely regarded again today,⁵⁰ and especially her lyric-musical work, the songs and sequences, adapted to the liturgical style, but yet composed in a very individual style. Through these, Hildegard assumes an important place in music history as well. For the most part, they revolve around the theme of virginity, to which Hildegard dedicates her poetic strength in a matchless amalgamation of nature and biblical-typological symbols. Mary as Dawn, out of which the Sun, Christ arises, becomes here the prototype of Woman in both lifestyles, of virginity and of physical fecundity; but it also becomes the prototype of every human soul which reveals itself to its Creator.⁵¹

III. THE SPECIAL NUANCES OF HILDEGARD'S IMAGE OF GOD AND OF THE HUMAN BEING

1. *The Image of God*

In her visions, Hildegard experiences God as the living light (*lux vivens*), as a life beyond male generative power (as she says in allusion to the Prologue of John), in order to emphasize the tran-

scendency, and, perhaps, also to put male arrogance in its place.⁵² All biological and spiritual life is a gift from this living light, and each threat to life, including the undermining of religious-spiritual life through a hypocritical clergy which has underhandedly gained its offices, is an offense against this source of life.⁵³ Although in her visions Hildegard uses strong male images to symbolize God, these images do not demand exclusivity in her work. The word of God in Isaiah (Is. 42:14), widely noted again today, where God identifies himself with a woman in labor, is taken up vividly by Hildegard and paraphrased in the feminine forms of Latin grammar. The parable of the lost drachma in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke gives Hildegard special opportunity to use a female "God-language." Here, according to Hildegard, the woman signifies the "sancta divinitas," who lights her lamp in Christ, in order to find the drachma – that is, lost mankind – once again. Christ as *sapientia Dei*, too, in his function as redeemer, is included in the female "God-language."⁵⁴

That such speaking about God, or about the godly domain, does not only unfold in mystical symbolism, but also appears in strictly abstract-theological contexts, is shown in Hildegard's letter in reply to a Parisian Master of Theology, who had asked her if it were possible to state, "that paternity and divinity are not equivalent to God [quod paternitas et divinitas Deus non sit]," that is, to distinguish concretely between paternity and God, as well as between divinity and God. To this, Hildegard answers:

For I looked upon the true light and I learned vigilantly and openly about what I saw, (though not by myself through investigation of my thought), that paternity is God as well as divinity, because man has not the power to apply a distinction like that between the humanity of man and of this man to God . . . The living light told me therefore in the secret word of wisdom: God is of absolute integrity and without a beginning in time, and therefore he cannot be divided terminologically just as man can be divided . . . For whoever says that paternity and divinity be not equivalent to God, this one names the central point without the circle.⁵⁵

In these sentences of Hildegard, it seems that more is taking place than merely intervention in a dialectical quarrel. In that she denies

not only the concrete discernability of a personal peculiarity (*pater-nitas*) of God, but also that of godly essence (*divinitas*) and God, she has theoretically safeguarded her own often-observable linguistic usage. When she speaks of God without consideration of personal distinctions – that is, when she does not have a trinitarian reference in mind – Hildegard prefers the female concept *divinitas*.

2. *The Human Being as God's Image*

Another characteristic typical of Hildegard can be found in her theory of the human being as God's image. Whereas the male theologians of Early and High Scholasticism make numerous reductions in the concept of woman being created in God's image, and attribute only to the man those characteristics of being similar to God (which assures man's authority in social and political life), Hildegard makes no distinction of gender in being created in the image of God.⁵⁶ In order to assure the *imago Dei* in its full sense for the female sex as well, she speaks rather of quasi-male and quasi-female characteristics in God, which are mirrored in mankind.

'And God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them . . .' In man also . . . he creates the power and fortitude of clear justice, so that neither within himself, nor in his relation to others, he would cowardly be defeated by iniquity, and this is quasi-male. God also creates the ability of man to protect – by help of divine grace – with mercy a person who is wounded by sins, just as he is attentive to his own misery. He would administer him the wine of repentance and anoint him with the oil of mercy, . . . and that is quasi-female.⁵⁷

Thus God instills his own qualities in the human being, and in the human being they are mirrored as male and female. The reciprocal reflection of the image of God in Man, but through the Incarnation of Christ also of the image of Man in God, is a major theme in Hildegard's work.

3. *Gender Symbolism*

Special attention to Hildegard's gender symbolism is also required. The nuances of that symbolism can only be observed against the background of contemporary Scholastic anthropology, which in general rates masculine qualities as positive and feminine qualities as negative.⁵⁸ Hildegard often follows this linguistic usage, whereby, however, one must always be careful not to overlook any typological relationships (cf. above: *Tempus muliebris debilitatis* = period of recurrence of the guilt of Eve). But at numerous points she undermines the Scholastic view of the human being, a view very often hostile toward women. She does this by valuing male strength negatively and female weakness positively. To be sure, she takes the image of Eve as the first fallen woman from Early Scholasticism as well as from Patristics, but only to oppose this Eve typologically with the other representative of mankind, Mary. Also, Eve is for Hildegard not simply identical with the sinner, but first of all Eve bears the special glory of the most perfect creation of God. The Eve of Paradise, and not only Mary, is, according to Hildegard, the exemplar for the nun.

For she must remain just like Eve before God represented her to Adam, when she looked not to Adam but to God.⁵⁹

It is precisely with this thought that Hildegard defends her liturgical ceremonies in the convent (at which the sisters appear with white silk veils and wreaths on their heads) against the headmistress of the canonic monastery in Andernach, Tengswich, who had attacked these ceremonies:

The living spring says . . . The form of woman shined and radiated in the first foundation in which it was formed, it is this in which all creature is concealed.⁶⁰

For Hildegard, the meaning of virginity is to mirror this glory of Creation, concentrated in woman and as yet undamaged. But Hildegard does not equate the *virgo* with the *vir*, as often is the case in male theology and philosophy from Patristics to Scholasticism, but rather, views the virginal type of existence as the pinnacle of

being female. Nevertheless, she does not unduly isolate from each other the two great groups of women, those who remain virgins and those who realize motherhood. Rather, she emphasizes time and again the mutual mirroring of these two lifestyles, of virginity in motherhood, and of motherhood in virginity. So it goes that, for her, Mary has the character of a model for all women.

The second vision of the first book of *Scivias* is significant for Hildegard's anthropology of the sexes. Here, she characterizes the first parents of the human race as "caro una in coniunctione caritatis." She thereby shows an understanding of marriage in accordance with Creation, as it is hardly found in Early Scholasticism, with the exception of Hugh of St. Victor. Whereas most male theologians in their treatises on marriage often speak of *libido*, and at most of fidelity, but scarcely of love (*caritas*), Hildegard demands a perfect love (*perfecta caritas*) as the basis for marital union. She does this at a time when personal decision in the planning of marriages was anything but self-evident. Hildegard considers *caritas* to be that form of love which anchors interpersonal relationships in God's love.

To be sure, Hildegard relies chiefly on the contemporary patriarchal understanding of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis, but only in order subsequently to counter this, in a certain sense. In a skillful way, Hildegard paraphrases the legal doctrine that the woman is to be under the power of the man [sub potestate viri]. Even centuries after Hildegard's time the subordination of women was justified by the so-called sentence of Eve by God after the Fall. The woman who conceives a child is considered by Hildegard as "viro subjecta," lying under the man. Thus, in Hildegard's work, the judicial concept and the patriarchal interpretation of the Bible are softened by means of reduction to natural symbolism and concrete biology. Hildegard never says that the woman is not under the power of the man, but the way she allows the woman to be "*viro subjecta*" is different and defamiliarizing in relation to what was usual then. That Hildegard stresses elements of equality of the sexes in reference to law, shows how she encouraged married women to bring complaints to church authorities in case of offenses by the man against the marital union [coniunctio]. Hildegard as attorney for her married sisters is even so bold as to supplement the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:9 in order to correct him. She says

that not only was woman created for the sake of man, but that he, also, was created for her sake. Thus she denies that the purpose of woman's existence relates exclusively to the man and describes the relationship of the sexes as equally strong in both directions. In this way, she provides numerous relativizing moments in a period when the man-woman hierarchy is a *sententia communis* of academic theology.

Hildegard also does not exclude married women from the excellence of Eve as the radiant creation of God. Taking the literal meaning of the Bible with her time for the historical meaning, Hildegard allows the man to be created from the earth, but the woman from the animated corporeality of the man. She thereby clearly places herself in a tradition of interpretation, found especially among women, according to which Eve was called into existence from a substance superior to that of Adam.⁶¹ With this theory, Hildegard compensates for the obligation of the woman to serve the man, an obligation that was accepted without question in her time. From the privileged creation of Eve from Adam, rather than from earth, Hildegard concludes that the woman is greater in complaisance and dexterity.

A woman, moreover, is not changed because, taken from the flesh, she remains flesh, and thus her gift is the skilful work of the hands.⁶²

With this greater dexterity it is made easy, so to speak, for the woman to serve the man. Seeing such consciously-set emphasis in Hildegard's work, however, requires special attention.

4. *The Strength of Female Weakness*

Hildegard's numerous modifications of contemporary modes of expression of male strength and female weakness are not to be overlooked.

God created humans male undoubtedly of a greater bravery, and female truly of a softer strength.⁶³

The female “weakness” is thus for her, nothing other than a more gentle power, therefore, without question, something other than mere passivity. Such paraphrases of the account of Creation show in Eve the reined power as the more perfect one. If Hildegard occasionally demands control of natural strengths from the man as well, in order to serve morality, then she is already approaching that concept of the human being which we today call the androgynous model.

From the excellence of Eve, Hildegard arrives at her quite varied and theologically so significant parallels of woman and Christ, which would hardly find anything similar in the academic theology originated by men. Only the original mother of the human race and Christ, corresponding to the literal meaning of the Bible, were brought into existence “not from the seed of man, but from the flesh” [*non ex semine viri, sed ex carne*]. Therefore Hildegard does not find it difficult to uncover parallels between the task of Christ and that of the woman:

God himself created man brave and women weak, whose weakness begets the world. And divinity is brave, moreover the flesh of the son of God is weak, through which the earth is regained in the earlier life.⁶⁴

This contrasting comparison of woman and Christ softens the antifeminist meaning of the contemporary equation of Christ’s divine nature with masculinity, and, Christ’s human nature with femininity. For here Hildegard emphasizes that salvation does not have the strong divine nature to thank but, rather, the “weak” human nature of the Savior, just as all humankind arose from the “weakness” of the woman. This form of woman-Christ parallel signifies an enormous increase in the valuation of the weak without it here being modified as sensitive, graceful, or agile, as is generally the case in Hildegard’s work.

5. *Woman and Wisdom*

Through the connection of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are always present for her, with the typical contemporary identifica-

tion of woman with fear of God [timor Dei], and with respect for her husband, Hildegard arrives at the special relation of woman and wisdom:

For she is like the house of wisdom, since the earthly and the heavenly are completed in her. For in one part mankind proceeds through her, in the other part, moreover, good works with the reverence of chastity are apparent in her.⁶⁵

Here again being woman is to be understood in the double meaning of virginity and motherhood, which both require the power of the woman to shelter wisdom. Contrary to neoplatonic-gnostic-manichaeian tendencies, which do not allow the female form of human being to appear in the eschaton, Hildegard hastens to assure that there will be resurrection of

all human beings in soul and in flesh . . . in perfection of both their body and their sex.⁶⁶

Thus, her anthropology views the woman as a human being just as definitively as it does the man, and as in no way derived from him. Since she is, however, aware that in the contemporary theology the reigning tendency is to think only of the man when using the term *homo*, she often considers it necessary to speak clearly, as for example at the decisive point of her explication of the Prologue to John in her third visionary work:

‘But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God,’ this means to all human beings of both sexes, who received him.⁶⁷

6. *The Weakness of Male Strength*

In addition to numerous positive interpretations of male strength, Hildegard also clearly shows the possibility of its perversion to harshness and cruelty. Thus she arrives at the following comparison, for example, in her description of the eschatologic confusion in *De operatione Dei*:

Just as a man in his strength defeats the softness of woman . . . - so the cruelty of certain people will destroy the quiet of others in these days.⁶⁸

Male Scholastics would hardly characterize the strength of the man [*fortitudo viri*] with a negative symbol, nor parallel it to cruelty. Similarly, in the *Liber meritorum vitae*, Hildegard describes the mixed figure of *Superbia* with a male chest, as a symbol for the conceit associated with this vice, which she ascribes in particular to men.⁶⁹ Conversely, the *topos* of female weakness obviously gives her occasion for self-criticism of the female sex.

In Hildegard's work, both male and female symbolism pass through a scale of negative to positive or positive to negative valuation. So familiarity with her texts is necessary in order to understand each anthropological nuance which she wishes to set out, and not to come to misjudgments about her image of the human being. Hildegard's comparison of the strength of the man with the hardness of stone, and, the weakness of the woman, modified to softness, recalls the comparison, to be found in the broader context, of the harshness of the Old Testament law with the hard-heartedness of the men of the Old Covenant and the mildness of the gospel with the gentle hearts of New Testament figures. This suggests at least that Hildegard relates softness as the positive side of the weakness of the woman to the New Testament. In this regard the woman has something of an advantage over the man, who, with the negative side of his strength, is related to the hard-heartedness of the Old Testament.

IV. CONCLUSION

Hildegard has enriched the image of both God and Man in many ways. In a patriarchal time, she proves that she is in no way a "man-identified woman," to be sure, not in social and literary life, and certainly not in regard to philosophy and theology. This is the case even if traces of contemporary thought were not able to pass over her without leaving their marks.

NOTES

1. Cf. Marianna Schrader, *Die Herkunft der Hl. Hildegard*, neu bearbeitet von Adelgundis Führkötter. *Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelhochdeutschen Kirchengeschichte*. Vol. 43. Isnard W. Frank, ed., Mainz, 1981.
2. J.P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Latina (Hereinafter as PL) 1978: 91–130.
3. On the relationship between Hildegard and Richardis von Stade, cf. Adelgundis Führkötter, *Hildegard von Bingen. Briefwechsel*. Salzburg, 1965. 93–100.
4. In this connection, cf. Maria Laetitia Brede, “Die Klöster der hl. Hildegard Rupertsberg und Eibingen,” in Anton Ph. Brück, ed., *Hildegard von Bingen. Festschrift zum 800. Todestag der Heiligen*. Mainz, 1979. 77–94.
5. Cf. Wolfgang Seibrich, “Geschichte des Klosters Disibodenberg,” in Brück *op. cit.*, p. 55–75, esp. 63.
6. On Hildegard’s travels, cf. Adelgundis Führkötter, “Hildegard von Bingen. Leben und Werk,” in Brück *op. cit.*, p. 31–54, esp. 48–50.
7. Brede *op. cit.*, p. 79, 82f.
8. Alois Dempf, *Sacrum Imperium. Geschichts- und Staatsphilosophie des Mittelalters und der politischen Renaissance*. Third edition, Munich, 1962. p. 261–68.
9. For example, Joseph Bernhart, “Hildegard von Bingen,” in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 20 (1929–30): 259. Similarly, Josef Koch, “Der heutige Stand der Hildegard-Forschung,” in *Historische Zeitschrift* 186 (1958): 568.
10. For a current understanding of passages discriminatory to women in the later scriptures of the New Testament, cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York, 1983.
11. Cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, “Anthropologie und soziale Stellung der Frau nach Summen und Sentenzenkommentaren des 13. Jahrhunderts,” in *Soziale Ordnungen im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters, Miscellanea Mediaevalia*. Veröffentlichungen des Thomas-Instituts der Universität zu Köln. Albert Zimmermann, ed. Vol. 12/1. (1979): 281–297.
12. Bruce Hozeski translation from *The Latin Scivias by Hildegard of Bingen*, Santa Fe: Bear & Company (1986), p. 78. “O quae es misera terra et in nomine femineo indocta de ulla doctrina carnalium magistrorum, scilicet legere litteras per intelligentiam philosophorum, sed tantum tacta lumine meo, quod tangit te interius cum incendio ut ardens sol, clama et enarra ac scribe haec mysteria mea quae vides et audis in mystica visione. Noli ergo esse timida, sed dic ea quae intelligis in spiritu, quemadmodum ea loquor per te.” *Scivias* II: 1. Adelgundis Führkötter and Angela Carlevaris, eds. *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 43. Turnholt, 1978, p. 111f. (Hereinafter as CCCM43). I use Hozeski’s translation with some corrections of my own.
13. The original was in Wiesbaden until 1945 and has since then been lost. Cf. the illustrations in Maura Böckeler, *Hildegard von Bingen. Wisse die Wege. Scivias*. Nach dem Originaltext des illuminierten Rupertsberger Kodex ins Deutsche übertragen und bearbeitet. Salzburg: 1954 and later editions. Also

- see, among others, Christel Meier, "Zum Verhältnis von Text und Illustration im überlieferten Werk Hildegards von Bingen," in A. Ph. Brück, *op. cit.*, p. 159–69.
14. Cf. Bertha Widmer, *Heilsordnung und Zeitgeschehen in der Mystik Hildegards von Bingen*, Basel, Stuttgart, 1955, p. 164f.
 15. On Hildegard's cosmology, see Charles Singer, *From Magic to Science*. London, 1928, Chapter VI, "The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen." Singer does not, however, agree with current Hildegard research when he suspects a portrayal of the "spirit of the macrocosm" in Hildegard (217).
 16. Cf. e.g. Margot Schmidt, "Maria – *materia aurea* in der Kirche nach Hildegard von Bingen," *Münchener Theol. Zeitschrift* 32 (1981): 16–32, esp. 19.
 17. CCCM 43, 49. Cf. Bruce Hozeski, *op. cit.* p. 49.
 18. On Neoplatonic influences and their limitations cf. Bertha Widmer *op. cit.*, p. 71, 76, 94.
 19. On Hildegard's series of visions of a city symbolizing the history of salvation in *Scivias* cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Mass- und Zahlangaben bei Hildegard von Bingen," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 16, Berlin 1984, p. 294–303.
 20. Bruce Hozeski, *op. cit.*, p. 87. "Deinde vidi serenissimam lucem et in ipsa sapphirini coloris speciem hominis quae tota suavissimo rutilante igne flagrabat. Et illa serena lux perfudit totum illum rutilantem ignem, et ille rutilans ignis totam illam serenam lucem, ac eadem serena lux et idem rutilans ignis totam speciem eiusdem hominis, ita lumen unum in una vi possibilitatis exsistentes." CCCM 43, 124.
 21. This vision has often been compared to that in the last song of Dante's *Paradiso*. Cf. Heinrich Ostlender, "Dante und Hildegard von Bingen", *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch* 18, Weimar, 1948.
 22. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, 1984, p. 170, recalls the similarity of Hildegard's Ecclesia with the figure of Philosophia in Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*.
 23. On this cf. B. Widmer *op. cit.*, p. 105–107. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Zyklisches und lineares Geschichtsbewusstsein im Mittelalter. Hildegard von Bingen, Johannes von Salisbury und andere," in *L'Homme et son Univers. Actes du Septième Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale* (30 Août–4 Septembre 1982). C. Weinin, ed., Louvain-la-Neuve, 1986. Vol. II, p. 882–892.
 24. Cf. B. Widmer *op. cit.*, p. 222–33. Elisabeth Gössmann, *Glaube und Gotteserkenntnis im Mittelalter*. Freiburg, 1971, p. 14–19.
 25. Cf. the meritorious work of Hans Liebeschütz, *Das allegorische Weltbild der hl. Hildegard von Bingen*, Leipzig, 1930, especially the chapter "Gegenwartskritik und Apokalyptik," p. 136–146.
 26. On this cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Die Kirchenkritik Hildegards von Bingen im Urteil des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," in Manfred Gerwing, Godehard Ruppert, eds, *Wider das Bild vom "finsternen" Mittelalter. Festschrift für Ludwig Hödl*. Münster, 1985, p. 215–223.
 27. This table is from Heinrich Schipperges, *Hildegard von Bingen: Der Mensch in der Verantwortung. Das Buch der Lebensverdienste*. Salzburg, 1972, p. 16.
 28. Haec autem velut lupus est, quia in rabie doli et in aspera vicissitudine omnium

malorum sine discretionem est. Quae flexis cruribus super pedes suos jacet, et ubique circumspicit, ut omnia quae rapere potest, deglutiatur, quoniam, inclinata fortitudine sua ad quaeque deteriora pessimis itineribus propriae voluntatis suae incumbit, et omnes vanitates considerat . . ." *Liber vitae meritorum* P. II, 58. Ed. Johannes B. Pitra, *Analecta Sanctae Hildegardis opera*, Monte Cassino 1882, p. 33f.

29. On this cf. Margot Schmidt, " 'Discretio' bei Hildegard von Bingen als Bildungselement," *Analecta Cartusiana* 35 (1983), p. 73–94.
30. ". . . quasi formam mulieris habebat, et supra dextrum latus suum jacebat, ac crura sua incurvando ad se contraxerat, velut homo qui in lecto suo otiose discumbit. Crines autem ejus ut flammae ignis fuerunt, et oculi ejus albi, . . . et alba calceamenta in pedibus habebat, quae tam lubrica erant, quod nec incedere, nec stare per illa poterat. Et ex ore suo quemdam anhelitum et quamdam venenosam spumam emisit, ac dextro ubere quasi catulum canis lactabat, sinistro autem velut viperam, et manibus flores arborum et herbarum decerpit, ac odorem illorum naribus cepit. Ipsa quoque alia indumenta non habuit, sed tota ignea fuit, et ardore suo omnia sibi adjacentia sicut fenum arefecit." *Liber vitae meritorum* P. III, 21 ed. Pitra, p. 112.
31. "Sicut firmamentum sole et luna confirmatur, ita et homo scientia boni et mali hac et illac versatur." *Liber divinorum operum* P. I, Visio 2, PL 197, 761.
32. Cf. R. Allers. "Microcosmos. From Anaximandros to Paracelsus," *Traditio* 2 (1944): 319–409, esp. 400f.
33. Cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Mass- und Zahlangaben bei Hildegard von Bingen," *loc. cit.*
34. Cf. Hans Liebeschütz *op. cit.*, as well as R. Reizenstein and H.H. Schraeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*. Leipzig, Berlin, 1926. Important new insights into the sources of Hildegard's concept of the cosmos can be expected in the as yet unpublished Habilitationsschrift by Christel Meier-Staubach. In the meantime cf. Christel Meier-Staubach, "Prophetisches Selbstverständnis und literarische Form im Visionswerk Hildegards von Bingen," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens* 35 (1983).
35. "Ita ut si anima plus comprehenderet quam intelligere aut movere posset, in injusta mensura esset." *Liber divinorum operum*, P. I, 4, PL 197, 815.
36. ". . . anima in humano corpore ab incoptione operum suorum usque ad finitionem eorum septem dona Sancti Spiritus aequali studio venerari debet." *Ibid*, PL 197, 819f.
37. Cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Das Menschenbild der Hildegard von Bingen und Elisabeth von Schönau vor dem Hintergrund der fröhscholastischen Anthropologie," in Peter Dinzelsbacher and Dieter R. Bauer, eds, *Frauenmystik im Mittelalter*, Ostfildern bei Stuttgart, 1985, p. 24–47.
38. Cf. Heinrich Schipperges, *Hildegard von Bingen. Heilkunde*, Salzburg, 1967, p. 39–41.
39. "In creatione hominis de terra alia terra sumpta est, quae homo est, et omnia elementa ei serviebant, quia eum vivere sentiebant, et obviam omnibus conversationibus ejus cum illo operabantur, et ipse cum illis. Et terra dabat viridita-

tem suam, secundum genus et naturam et mores et omnem circumitionem hominis. Terra enim cum utilibus herbis ostendit circumitionem spiritalium morum hominis, eos discernendo, sed inutilibus herbis demonstrat inutiles et diabolicos mores eius," PL 197, 1125.

40. Here, an example of the insertion of a word from the native language into the Latin text, probably because it deals with a specific reference to a real concept which Hildegard could not express other than in its natural context. From this we can draw conclusions about the widespread system of magic and charms among popular circles of the Middle Ages.
41. "De Jacincto. Jacinctus in prima hora diei ab igne oritur, cum aer mites illos calores habet . . . Et homo qui caliginem in oculis patitur, aut cui oculi turbidi sunt . . . jachant ad solem teneat, et ille statim reminiscitur quia de igne genitus est, et cito incalescit, et mox in saliva eum parum permade, et ita oculis citissime apponat, ut inde calefiat, et sic saepe faciat et oculi clarificabuntur et sani erunt. Et si quis per fantasmata aut per magica verba *bezaubert* est, ita quod amens efficitur, accipe siligineum panem calidum, et eum in superiori crusta in modum crucis scinde, . . . et lapidem istum per scissuram istam deorsum trahe et dic: Deus, qui omnem pretiositatem lapidum de dyabolo abjecit, cum praeceptum ejus transgressus est, de te, N., omnia fantasmata et omnia magica verba abjiciat, et de te dolorem amentiae huius absolvat." *Physica* L. IV, PL 197, 1250f.
42. Cf. Irmgard Müller, *Die pflanzlichen Heilmittel bei Hildegard von Bingen*, Salzburg, 1982.
43. Cf. Peter Riethe, *Hildegard von Bingen. Das Buch von den Steinen*. Salzburg, 1979.
44. "Quidam autem masculi sunt, qui viriles existunt, et hi cerebrum forte et spissum habent . . . Et color faciei eorum aliquantum rubicundus velut in quibusdam imaginibus videtur, qui rubeo colore colorantur . . . Ventus quoque, qui in lumbis eorum est, magis igneus quam ventosus est; qui duo tabernacula sibi subdita habet, in quae flat ut in follem. Et haec tabernacula stirpem omnium virium hominis circumdant et ei in adiutorium sunt, ut aliqua parva aedificia iuxta turrim posita, quae illum defendunt. Ac ideo duo sunt, ut tanto fortius praedictam stirpem circumdent et solident ac teneant, et ut tanto fortius et aptius praefatum ventum excipiant et ad se trahant, et ut aequaliter eum emittant, velut duo folles, qui aequaliter flant in ignem. Unde etiam cum eandem stirpem in virtute sua erigunt, eam fortiter tenent, et ita eadem stirps frondet in prolem." *Hildegardis Causae et Curae*. L. II, ed. Paulus Kaiser, Leipzig, 1903, 70.
45. "Delectatio autem in muliere soli comparatur, qui blande et leniter et assidue terram calore suo perfundit, ut fructus proferat, quia si eam acrius in assiduitate incenderet, fructus magis laederet quam eos produceret. Ita etiam et delectatio in muliere blande et leniter sed tamen assidue colorem habet, ut prolem concipiat et pariat . . . Cum enim delectatio in muliere surgit, levior in ea est quam in viro." *Ibid.* 76.
46. Cf. also P. Dronke *op. cit.*, who cannot readily agree with Schipperges' opinion on interpolations in this work. Dronke sees in this work of Hildegard on the

- one hand, an attempt "to project a wholly positive theology of sex," and on the other: "There are indeed a number of passages of Manichaeic inclination . . . At times it sounds as if the human sexual impulse as such is a taint and direct result of the Fall." (176).
47. On Hildegard's correspondence, cf. Marianna Schrader, Adelgundis Führkötter, *Die Echtheit des Schrifttums der hl. Hildegard von Bingen*, Cologne, Graz, 1956.
 48. On Hildegard's works, editions of her works, and translations of her works, cf. Werner Lauter, *Hildegard-Bibliographie*, vol. 1. Alzey, 1970; vol. 2, Alzey, 1984.
 49. Cf. Heinrich Schipperges, *Hildegard von Bingen. Welt und Mensch, das Buch "De Operatione Dei."* Salzburg, 1965, p. 11.
 50. Edition and English translation by Peter Dronke; cf. W. Lauter *op cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 28.
 51. Cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, *Die Verkündigung an Maria im dogmatischen Verständnis des Mittelalters*. Munich, 1957, pp. 111–15.
 52. On this cf. also P. Dronke *op. cit.*, p. 152: "She is a woman, and she claims to have received prophetic illuminations: she is disbelieved and mocked on both counts. So too in one of Hildegard's lyrical sequences for St. Ursula, she pictures Ursula shouting out her longing to race through the heavens and join the divine Sun, and causing scandal by her mystical utterances – so that men said: 'What simple, girlish ignorance! She does not know what she is saying.'"
 53. On this, cf. Margot Schmidt, "Der Mensch als Schatten Gottes. Zum Gottes- und Menschenbild bei Hildegard von Bingen," *Aktuelle Information* (Mainz) 10: 1979, 1–27.
 54. On this, cf. Barbara J. Newman, *O feminea forma: God and Woman in the Works of St. Hildegard*, Ph.D. Diss. Yale University, 1981. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Mulier domus Sapientiae. Zur frauenbezogenen Spiritualität Hildegards von Bingen," in Margot Schmidt, D.R. Bauer, eds., *Eine Höhe über die nichts geht. Frauenmystik*. Stuttgart/Bad Cannstadt, 1986, p. 1–18.
 55. "Nam ad verum lumen vidi et didici vigilanter et aperte videndo, quod non per me in me requirendo, quod paternitas et divinitas Deus est, quia homo hanc potestatem non habet, ut de Deo dicat, sicut de humanitate hominis . . . Vivens ergo lux in secreto verbo sapientiae dicit: Deus plenus est et integer, et absque principio temporum, et ideo non potest dividi sermone, sicut homo dividi potest . . . Quicumque enim dicit quod paternitas et divinitas non sit Deus, hic nominat punctum absque circulo." Ep. 127, PL 197, 352f. In Hildegard research, this letter is considered one of renunciation of the teaching of Gilbert de la Porrée, but it is quite possible to surmise that Hildegard is also pursuing her own objectives. Except when she speaks of the Old Testament God, whom she calls *Deus*, she shows a preference for the word *divinitas* in non-trinitarian contexts.
 56. Cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Die Deutung der menschlichen Gottbildlichkeit im Mittelalter." Guest lecture at the University of Munich, July 17, 1984; reproduced as manuscript by the Fachschaftsausschuss Katholische Theologie [Department Committee of Catholic Theology] in Munich.

57. "Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam, ad imaginem Dei creavit illum, masculum et feminam creavit eos . . . In homine quoque . . . vim et fortitudinem perspicuae iustitiae creat, ita ut nec in se ipso, nec in aliis iniquitati ullatenus prave cedat, quod quasi virile est. In eo etiam creat, ut per donum divinae gratiae homini in peccatis vulnerato cum misericordia parcat, et ut miseria ipsius ita adtendat, quatenus vinum poenitentiae ei infundat, ipsumque oleo misericordiae ungat, . . . quod quasi femineum est." *Liber divinorum operum*, P. II Visio 5, PL 197, 951f. The allegorical interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan is additional background for these sentences.
58. On this, cf. E. Gössmann, "Das Menschenbild . . ." *op. cit.*
59. "Nam ipsa debet sic permanere ut Eva fuit antequam eam Deus Adae repraesentaret, cum illa tunc non ad Adam, sed ad Deum aspexit." Ep. 141, PL 197, 372.
60. "Fons vivus dicit . . . Forma mulieris fulminavit et radiavit in prima radice, in qua formatum est hoc in quo omnis creatura latet." Ep. 116, PL 197, 337.
61. On this tradition of women, cf. Elisabeth Gössmann, *Archiv für philosophie- und theologiegeschichtliche Frauenforschung*, vol. 1, Munich (iudicium) 1984, introduction: "Die Gelehrsamkeit der Frauen im Rahmen der europäischen Querelle des Femmes."
62. "Mulier autem mutata non est, quia de carne sumpta caro permansit, et ideo datum est ei artificiosum opus manuum." *Causae et curae*, ed. P. Kaiser, Leipzig, 1903, p. 59.
63. "Creavit Deus hominem, masculum, scilicet majoris fortitudinis, feminam vero mollioris roboris." *Liber divinorum operum*, P. II, Visio 5, PL 197, 945.
64. "Ipse etiam Deus virum fortem et feminam debilem creaverat, cuius debilitas mundum generavit. Et divinitas fortis est, caro autem filii Dei infirma, per quam mundus in priorem vitam recuperatur." *Liber vitae meritum*, P. IV, 32, ed. Pitra, 157f. Heinrich Schipperges may take credit for correcting a mistake in Pitra's reading: instead of *mendum* – *mundum*.
65. "Ipsa enim quasi domus sapientiae est, quoniam terrestria et coelestia in ipsa perficiuntur. Nam in altera parte homo per eam procedit, in altera autem bona opera cum verecundia castitatis in ipsa apparent." *Liber vitae meritum*, P. I, 96, ed. Pitra, 44.
66. ". . . omnes homines in anima et corpore . . . in integritate et corporis et sexus sui . . ." *Scivias*, L. III, Visio 12, CCCM 43A, p. 608.
67. "Quotquot autem receperunt eum, dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri, quoniam omnibus hominibus utriusque sexus qui eum receperunt." *Liber divinorum operum*, P. I, Visio 4, PL 197, 897.
68. "Sicut enim vir fortitudine sua femineam molliem vincit, . . . ita et crudelitas quorundam hominum quietem aliorum in diebus illis . . . consumet." *Liber divinorum operum*, P. III, Visio 10, PL 197, 1019f.
69. *Liber vitae meritum*, P. III, 42, ed. Pitra, 119f.

3. Heloise

MARY ELLEN WAITHE

I. BIOGRAPHY

Heloise's birth is usually dated to 1100 or 1101.¹ Her mother is believed to have been named Hersinde, but following an early education at the Benedictine convent of Argenteuil, Heloise lived with her maternal uncle, a man named Fulbert. Argenteuil had a reputation for education of women equal only to that of Helfta in Germany, home of Gertrude the Great, Mechtild of Hackeborn, Gertrude of Hackeborn and Mechtild of Magdeburg. Heloise's early reputation for learning was so great that by approximately age 16 the greatest living philosopher in France, an unordained cleric named Pierre Abelard, agreed to become her private tutor. Abelard soon seduced her. Although Heloise's letters show that she found their sexual liaison physically and emotionally satisfying, they also show that she always considered it to be morally wrong. According to Abelard's fifth letter, it was on moral grounds that Heloise withheld her consent and physically and verbally resisted his advances to the best of her ability.² He admits to Heloise that he had sometimes forced her to have intercourse with him. The passage is translated by Etienne Gilson:

When you objected to it yourself and resisted with all your might, and tried to dissuade me from it, I frequently forced your consent (for after all you were the weaker) by threats and blows.³

Pregnant by Abelard soon after becoming his student, Heloise would argue against agreeing to a marriage intended to legitimize the child and save her reputation. She ultimately obeyed Abelard's command to marry him, and always regretted the decision. She had

promised Abelard, as had her irate uncle, to keep the marriage a secret, thus preserving Abelard's public position. Nevertheless, Fulbert disclosed the marriage, which resulted in Heloise perjuring herself to deny the relationship. The uncle, to whose home she had returned following the birth of the child Astralabe, retaliated by mistreating her, so Abelard ordered her to return to Argenteuil and take the veil. Furious that the couple conspired to deny the marriage and made the denial seem true by cloistering Heloise, Fulbert had Abelard castrated. The possibility of conjugal marriage now irrevocably foreclosed, Abelard sought final ordination. Years later, Heloise engaged in philosophical and theological correspondence with Abelard. In what follows, I briefly describe the controversy over the authenticity of her *Epistolae* (letters to Abelard and to Peter the Venerable) and her *Problemata* (problems, also addressed to Abelard), her intellectual background, and some philosophical issues she addressed.

II. HELOISE THE SCHOLAR

There has always been a question of the authenticity of works commonly attributed to Heloise. In part the authenticity question arose because it was widely believed that a woman would not have had an opportunity to acquire the rich intellectual background that the author of works attributed to Heloise obviously had acquired. However unlikely it is that a woman would have received such an education, it is clear that Heloise did, and that she had achieved scholarly distinction prior to meeting Abelard. In part the authenticity question arose out of philologist's usual concern for copyists' interpolations and other textual corruptions. In this section both aspects of the authenticity question are examined in order to establish that Heloise was a scholar in her own right, and not merely a student of a famous philosopher; and that she was the author of those works usually attributed to her, viz., the *Epistolae Heloissae* and the *Problemata Heloissae*.

1. *Intellectual Background*

It is commonly assumed that because Heloise was Abelard's

student, her learning began and ended with Abelard. Since she became pregnant by him not long after he became her tutor, and since he remanded her to the convent at Argenteuil shortly after their child's birth, the assumption that Heloise owed all her learning to Abelard entails that he had less than two years in which to bring her to the level of intellectual development she reached. However, her education at Argenteuil had been a "state of the art" 12th century women's education. According to Abelard, Heloise knew Latin, Hebrew⁴ and Greek⁵. She would have been able to study Latin versions of the classical works of Greek and Roman philosophy, theology, history and literature. She would have learned rhetoric – the art of persuasion through logical argument grammatically and aesthetically composed. Even a cursory glance through Heloise's writings would reveal a list of theorists with whose views she was familiar: Aeschines Socraticus, Ambrose, Aristotle, Augustine – to name some at the beginning of the alphabet.

According to Abelard, Heloise was a reknowned scholar before she met him. Peter Dronke, referring to results of his comparison of the rhetorical superiority of Heloise's writings to those of Abelard, notes:

This seems to warrant an inference that may cause many scholars surprise or even alarm. It has been tacitly or expressly assumed hitherto that, in their relationship, Heloise, some twenty years younger than Abelard, was in all respects the disciple and he the master – that he imparted knowledge to her while she absorbed it. And yet we know from [Abelard's] *Historia calamitatum* that Heloise, when Abelard first met her, was already 'supreme in the abundance of her literary knowledge' . . . and that this had made her 'most renowned in the whole kingdom' of France.⁶

If Heloise was the more talented at rhetoric, as Dronke claims (see below) and the more knowledgeable in literature, might she not also have some original philosophical contributions to make to the dialogue with Abelard? To paraphrase a comment Dronke makes:

She who at seventeen was renowned in all France for her literary knowledge was assuredly capable, in her thirties, [when the *Epistolae* and *Problemata* were written] of thinking independently.⁷

According to Dronke,⁸ J.T. Muckle suggests that Abelard was guilty of wholesale borrowing of Heloise's arguments without attribution. Muckle points out that the quotes Heloise uses in *Epistola II* in her argument against marriage, all appear in Abelard's *Theologia Christiana*, Book II, written prior to the *Historia Calamitarum* but after Heloise was installed at Argenteuil. (Muckle implies that Heloise therefore would not have seen *Theologia* prior to composing the letter.) According to Muckle, it appears that Abelard filled in the details of Heloise's arguments drawn from those of earlier philosophers, as though he had constructed the argument himself. Whether or not Abelard borrowed arguments from Heloise, it is clear that by the time he met her, she was sufficiently well educated as to be reknowned for her scholarly knowledge. But, her ability to develop the quality of philosophical and theological writing evidenced in the works attributed to her addresses only one aspect of the authenticity issue. The other issue is whether the same writer is responsible for the entire corpus, and if so, whether Heloise is that writer. I now turn to a brief examination of that issue.

2. *Authenticity of Epistolae and Problemata*

Dronke claims¹⁰ that the fact that only one manuscript of the *Problemata* has survived, the fact that it is from Saint-Victor, and the quality of the copy, suggest that the *Problemata* come to us in a form which is probably not heavily edited or revised for publication by copyists.

Etienne Gilson argues on different grounds for the authenticity of the Heloise-Abelard correspondence. Gilson refutes Orelli's claims,¹¹ that the correspondence was created posthumously by an admirer of the alleged signatories. Abelard's *Historia Calamitarum* reports a complaint of Heloise that she hadn't seen nor heard from Abelard since their "conversion" to monastic life. If this were true, it would contradict a claim by Heloise, made in the correspondence, thus calling into question the authenticity of the correspondence. (It would not call into question Abelard's *Historia Calamitarum*, authenticated on other grounds.) Gilson¹² informs us that Lalanne questions the authenticity of the *Epistolae* attributed to Heloise, primarily because Lalanne's reading of Heloise's text is based on

that of Oddoul, (and following its repetition by Lalanne, the reading was repeated by Greard, Schmeidler and Charrier).¹³ Gilson argues that if these translators realized the common interchangeability of the terms *conversio* and *conversatio* in the critical editions of the text of the Benedictine Rule as explained by Dom C. Butler,¹⁴ they would read *conversio* as synonymous with *conversatio* and would realize that Heloise's letter to Abelard does not contradict facts recorded in Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*, but confirms those facts. Having shown the controversy over the authenticity of the correspondence to be based on a failure to recognize the synonymy of two words, Gilson considers the authenticity question moot.

Gilson wrote the lectures on which his book is based in 1937. His work is still considered the definitive commentary on the *Epistolae*. Later scholars, using validated methods of linguistic analysis have been able to buttress Gilson's claims regarding the authenticity of the *Epistolae* and *Problemata* attributed to Heloise. Dronke uses the highly validated Chi-square test, a statistical method which when used in philological and linguistic analysis, can identify stylistic details of an author's writing which occur due to the author's preference for, e.g., a particular cadence, and those cadences for example, which cannot be shown to be any more than fortuitous occurrences. From this analysis, Dronke has drawn two conclusions which will be of interest to philosophers studying Heloise's writings. First, Heloise and Abelard write in styles that are identifiably distinct from those of other twelfth century writers including Hildebert, John of Salisbury, Bernard Silvestris, Peter the Venerable (who corresponded with Heloise) and Peter of Blois. Furthermore, Heloise writes in a style that is markedly distinct from Abelard's. This means that concerns about the authenticity of her works, specifically, questions whether Abelard or another contemporary writer might have authored or edited her works can be put to rest. Dronke's second conclusion is that both Heloise and Abelard were strongly influenced in their style of writing by the stylistic treatise *Praecepta dictaminum* of Adalbertus Samaritanus. He says:

Yet the evidence indicates that both Abelard and Heloise must have known either Adalbertus' *ars* itself or one that was very close to it, and that they were stylistically influenced by such an

ars, though Heloise followed the teachings more consciously and extensively than Abelard. That is, not only is Heloise's writing a product of high artistic nurture, but we can see how it was schooled by one of the most modern and most unusual stylistic currents of her day.¹⁵

From this Dronke concludes¹⁶ that the highly expressive style which Heloise mastered liberated her powers of self-expression.

If Dronke is correct in his scientific analysis of Heloise's writing style, then we must conclude that just as Heloise was capable of developing a rhetorical style that was of a very high technical and artistic calibre, and that was unique among writers of her time, she could have been capable of developing the philosophical views which were expressed through her rhetorical style.

On the strength of the foregoing, we can conclude that there are two senses in which the writings attributed to Heloise are authentic. First, she had a background from which she could have been expected to become well-educated; her considerable literary abilities, clearly superior to Abelard's, and her scholarly reknown prior to her relationship with Abelard evidence that she in fact became sufficiently educated to have produced the corpus attributed to her. Second, the corpus of the work is of a unique style identifiable as that of the author of the *Problemata* who is known to be Heloise, therefore the corpus of the work is authentically Heloise's. These two senses in which Heloise's writings are authentic merit examination of her ideas as though they were her own, and not as though they were indisputably derivative of Abelard's. Although she and Abelard had major areas of agreement, it is mistaken, I shall argue, to assume that Heloise was merely writing what she thought Abelard wanted to hear. If we assume that Heloise merely parroted Abelard's philosophy we overlook some significant philosophical positions that are not at all derivative of Abelard. Indeed, Heloise's views are cunningly critical of Abelard's ability to apply philosophical ideals which he professed, to his own moral decision-making. I now turn to an examination of some of Heloise's philosophical views, specifically, her views on the nature of love, on material vs. moral responsibility, and on marriage. These views are found in her *Epistolae* (letters) to Abelard, and her *Problemata* (problems), also addressed to Abelard.

III. PHILOSOPHY

1. *Philosophy of Love*

In a long discussion Gilson identifies the philosophical foundations of Heloise's views on love and friendship, and interprets Heloise's actions towards Abelard in terms of that philosophical orientation.¹⁷ It is important to note also, that in Gilson's estimate, Heloise does not simply seek to enunciate and work out a philosophy of love, but lives according to it also. From the *Epistolae* it is clear that Heloise based her views of love on Cicero's philosophy. The central principle both Heloise and Abelard derived from Cicero was that the fruit of true love is the love itself. That is to say, love is disinterested in anything but the giving of love. All the true friend or the true lover wants in return is the experience of giving love to the beloved.¹⁸ According to Gilson, Heloise's attempt to avoid marriage has its basis in Ciceronian principles. Examination of Heloise's letters strongly suggest that Heloise realized that these were principles Abelard taught but did not live by. In her correspondence, and in Abelard's recording of her earlier arguments in his *Historia Calamitatum*, it is clear that Heloise understands, but Abelard does not, how to apply Ciceronian principles to the living of one's own life. For too late, Heloise recognized that Abelard's character was missing an important component of moral action: the psychological commitment to acting as one believes one ought to act. In Aristotelian terms, the practical syllogism did not result in practical action. Abelard's application of Ciceronian principles of love was purely theoretical, not practical. He did not perceive that the relationship with Heloise was just the kind of situation in which those principles ought to be acted upon. Abelard, a man of theoretical reason was not a person of practical reason. Heloise was.

Heloise's primary philosophical objections to agreeing to the marriage with Abelard was that to agree to marry him would be inconsistent with loving him disinterestedly, i.e., for himself, rather than for herself. Loving him disinterestedly would require that she love him in a way that is for his highest good, and that consisted in fulfilling the ideal of philosopher-cleric. Heloise wants to love Abelard in a way that is conducive to his fulfilling what she assumes is his intention to live according to his ideals. To her that means

total and complete separation. Their sexual relationship and its ensuing pregnancy evidenced that formulating a moral intention was insufficiently strong to avoid being overcome by irrational passion. Their sexual relationship represented, in her view, her innocent (because coerced) role in his lapse in living according to his intention. That intention was to live a life fulfilling the duties of the offices of philosopher and cleric. But, Heloise reasons, there is no justification for turning a temporary triumph of passion over reason into a permanent abandonment of the pursuit of those ideals.

What it takes Heloise a long time to understand is that Abelard was all too willing to abandon moral ideals for passionate satisfaction. He is not so willing to practice what he has preached. She may have temporarily allowed passion to triumph over reason, or she may have thought that he allowed passion a temporary victory over a moral ideal, but when he insists on marriage following the birth of their son, it becomes clear to her that he is in danger of making passion's victory permanent. For Abelard, living according to the ideal does not matter quite so much as creating the impression in others (Heloise excluded – why, does her opinion of his virtue not count?) that his life is lived according to those moral principles. He wishes to marry her secretly, so that he can have access to her sexually – she would be sacramentally required (and passionately inclined) to maintain a sexual relationship with him – while maintaining the outward appearance of living the virtuous life of a celibate. For Heloise, loving Abelard for himself entails loving him for those ideals he has rationally chosen as his own. It does not entail providing him with the opportunity to permanently abandon the ideal of being a celibate philosopher by marrying.

And, while Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* has scrupulously recorded Heloise's arguments against marriage, he does not appear to understand, she complains, that her arguments against marriage are not the same arguments she raises in favor of free love.¹⁹ Heloise views their marriage as something others would take to be evidence that she did not love Abelard in the sense which she did. She loved him for himself, even though he wanted marriage only to guarantee sexual access to her, and did not love her for herself. Heloise's first letter reminded Abelard that because she was known to be the subject of the many popular love poems Abelard had written, others would assume that she would benefit from their marriage.

She had refused to marry him because marriage would benefit neither of them. Marriage would thwart Abelard's interests in living up to his ideal of being a celibate philosopher cleric. Marriage would make it appear that she permitted the seduction in order to secure the benefits of marriage:

From the very moment she became his wife, Heloise would never again be sure that she was not becoming an accomplice to Abelard's moral fall for the purpose of satisfying her personal interest. Such, in sum, was Heloise's drama . . .²⁰

But Abelard was determined to acquire Heloise sexually one way or another. For him the only question was a contextual one: would it be inside a secret marriage or outside marriage altogether? Prior to his castration, he was not considering celibacy at all, although he wanted dearly to preserve the impression of celibacy. He wanted to *appear* to live the moral ideal, not *actually* to live it. Abelard then, had lost sight of what he really wanted. By refusing marriage, Heloise was acting as a true lover in the Ciceronian sense: she was loving him disinterestedly. She was acting paternalistically in an important sense too. By refusing marriage, she was helping Abelard to secure his rational wants, his freely chosen moral ends. She was helping him to exemplify his real will, rather than his apparent, passion-directed will.

Heloise wanted to have no part in Abelard's abandonment of his ideal. She may have *caused* that abandonment, caused that passion, but she was not morally responsible for it.²¹ She would not agree either to the seduction (Abelard admitted to force and threats), nor to the marriage, for marriage merely legitimized passionate abandonment of the ideal. Heloise had begged Abelard to exclude her participation in solemnizing and legitimizing through marriage his fall from idealism.

Heloise's second letter reports an important concession she made to Abelard's abandonment of the moral ideal. Abelard's persistence in allowing passion to dominate reason, she argued, should still have preserved the option of reinstating reason to its proper role in his decision-making process. If he would allow his passion to cloud his reason and to become interpolated between himself and his ideal, if he would not refrain from having Heloise's physical love,

then at least he could have preserved the option of chastity in the future. She had offered to help him preserve that option, she said, by offering herself as his mistress. He continued to press for marriage, a sacrament requiring conjugation. Finally, and to her endless regret, she had relented. Why? The devil had, without her consent, caused her to acquiesce in sinning against Abelard. That sin was the sacrament of marriage.²² And while Heloise acknowledges that she has sinned, and has committed a crime against Abelard, she maintains that she was not morally responsible for having done so.

When, shortly after their marriage, Abelard took Heloise to live at Argenteuil, she might have been persuaded that after all, he intended to live a life of celibacy. She might have hoped that his love for her would become as purely disinterested as hers continued to be for him. Was Heloise hoping that the passion which had led Abelard to coerce their sexual liaison and subsequent marriage had finally been subdued by reasoned morality? Perhaps she was, but hope was soon to be dashed. When Abelard was castrated by Fulbert's accomplices shortly after Abelard hid Heloise in the convent, his professed love for Heloise ceased.

Later, when Heloise learned about the attack, she felt responsible for the mutilation. After all, had she persisted in her refusal to marry him, Fulbert might not have retaliated:

The punishment you suffered would have been proper vengeance for men caught in open adultery. But what others deserve for adultery came upon you through a marriage which you believed had made amends for all previous wrong doing; what adulterous women have brought upon their lovers, your own wife brought on you . . . You alone were punished though we were both to blame.²³

We can speculate about the conclusions drawn by a woman as intelligent and perceptive as Heloise. Perhaps she came to realize that once castrated, once sexual liaison was impossible, Abelard no longer loved her. The passion which had endured in her was in Abelard merely temporary. And in Abelard, passion had more than temporarily overwhelmed a pure Ciceronian love. Abelard had never had a love for Heloise separate from his passion. Did it ever become clear to Heloise that overcoming passion would not have

meant a return to “disinterested, selfless friendship” because none had ever existed for Abelard? Overcoming passion would only have meant the end of their personal relationship. Did Heloise come to realize that Abelard never really loved her, but had only desired her? Did this realization prompt her appeal to him for attention, concern and respect based on the legal and ecclesiastical relationships they shared? Is that why she demanded her rights as wife and as abbess?

2. *Material and Moral Responsibility*

In her first letter²⁴ Heloise joins Abelard’s doctrine on moral intention to the Ciceronian doctrine of pure, disinterested love.²⁵ According to Abelard, the moral value of an act depends upon its intention. Thus, one can act in a way that is morally wrongful, but not be morally responsible, or guilty for the commission of the act if one did not intend a wrongful act to be committed. One can sin merely by forming the intent to sin, whether or not one carries out the intention. This is the position Heloise maintains: that she caused harm to Abelard (in many ways: by arousing his passion, by marrying him, by providing Fulbert with a reason for castrating him). But she is not guilty. She has committed a sin, but she is not responsible, she is innocent:

In a wicked deed, rectitude of action depends not on the effect of the thing but on the affections of the agent, not on what is done but with what dispositions it is done.²⁶

This position on moral responsibility may help us to understand better Heloise’s judgment of Abelard’s virtue. She is devastated to realize that the very arguments and principles of morality she learned from Abelard and subscribed to, did not move him or guide his actions towards her. Worse, she cannot even say that he was, like her, innocent. She somehow separates her action from her intention and survives morally non-responsible. But can Abelard? It becomes clear to her, in *Epistola II*, that he never had the same good intentions towards her that prompted her behavior towards him. Where she refused marriage out of disinterested friendship, he

pursued marriage out of lust. Where she accepted the veil so that he could pursue the ideal chaste life of a philosopher and cleric, he hid her to avoid social sanction. Where she extended the same selfless love both before and after his castration, he lost interest once the possibility of satisfying his physical desires vanished. At every turn, Abelard's actions were consistent with the moral worthlessness of his intention. His actions toward Heloise were motivated only by power, position and pleasure. Therefore, if we are to carry Heloise's arguments further than she explicitly does, twelve to fifteen years following the events under consideration, at the time she writes to Abelard, Heloise would hold that Abelard was morally blameworthy and not just materially responsible. Heloise, while materially responsible, would remain morally non-blameworthy.

3. *Views on Marriage*

Gilson notes that Abelard's confession of his violence and brutality towards Heloise tells us much about his moral character, but it tells us much about Heloise, too. Heloise believes that the dignity of a philosopher and a cleric requires continence. Abelard's conclusion was that he therefore should be secretly married to Heloise, ensuring him the outward facade of continence, and the private privilege of sexual access to Heloise. In short, he could keep his job without sacrificing an active sex life. Heloise concluded differently, Gilson explains. From the premise that the dignity of a philosopher and cleric required continence, Heloise concluded that they should not marry, and, indeed, should not maintain any personal connection.

She was not satisfied that Abelard should have the air of greatness, she wanted him to be great . . . Thence her direct arguments and the decisive conclusions she drew from them. By marriage Abelard was sanctioning forever a lapse that would otherwise be temporary. Unquestionably, once married, their love would become morally and religiously legitimate; but judged from . . . the ideal of cleric and philosopher, their life would remain as impure as it was before, save that now it would be irrevocably confirmed in its impurity.²⁷

Abelard was a philosopher, Heloise argued, and philosophers belong to the world, not to domestic life. How could a poor philosopher fulfill duties to the world and duties toward family simultaneously? Moreover, marriage would alter his clerical status, by foreclosing the option of becoming a priest, and hence the possibility of retaining his faculty appointment. In this sense he would be choosing the life of domesticity and over that of the intellect and the spirit. In support of her arguments, Heloise cites Paul, Jerome and Cicero. She pleads to be Abelard's mistress rather than his wife. He refuses. Ultimately, sorrowfully, and, portending disaster, she agrees:

Of a certainty we shall both be destroyed; and our sorrow match in its intensity the love that has been ours.²⁸

Heloise's first letter to Abelard after receiving the *Historia Calamitarum*, acknowledges that the arguments against marriage he attributes to her are indeed hers, but that he has omitted some of them. Specifically,²⁹ he has failed to report that she had preferred love to marriage, freedom to a bond. Even though she now has a position of some respectability and, even power, she has maintained the earlier view. Given another opportunity to make the choice, she would make the same choice. But Heloise's "free love" views are only deceptively feminist: she prefers prostitution, as she calls it, to marriage because marriage would not be for Abelard's good. It would bind him, limit his career and his freedom more than it would her own. Heloise loved him only for himself. In her view, his good was not to be found in the married state. Yet, she insists on the prerogatives of marriage once the marriage has taken place. In her first letter she reminds him that after the marriage (to which in her view, she acquiesced but did not consent) she fulfilled her new duties of obedience to her husband. She returned to Argenteuil, and later, established the Paraclete at his direction. She had no say in these matters, but obeyed his will completely. Part of her duty as wife includes reminding him of his spousal duties towards her. Part of her duty as the abbess under his direction is to help him fulfill his ecclesiastical duties toward the religious community which she established under his order. As his wife she is entitled to love from him, and as the abbess under his priestly direction she is entitled to

solicit guidance and direction from him. These are not quite the kinds of demands a prostitute could hope to make. As Elizabeth Hamilton notes:

That Abelard should neglect to interest himself in the well-being of Heloise; that he who is not only the founder of the Paraclete but her husband should take no steps to help her in the life that she is leading at his order, is in her eyes a grave defect.³⁰

It is worthwhile, when considering Heloise's views on marriage, to bear in mind that her views on material vs. moral responsibility are consistent with her assessment of her own moral innocence and Abelard's guilt. We will recall that in the last question of the *Problemata* she asks, referring to marriage, whether it is possible to sin in a matter which has been allowed, or even commanded by God. Here, her views on marriage are made to fit more squarely within Abelard's own ethic of intention. Since it is the intent, and not the act itself which is sinful, Heloise must examine both her intent and Abelard's in partaking in the sacrament of marriage. Both, we know from her letters, were found wanting. She never fully formed the intent, and, claiming innocence, and weakness of will, notes that the devil tempted her to do that which was wrong. Abelard, on the other hand, suffered no such temptation. His intent was evil: to have sexual access to Heloise while publicly maintaining the appearance of a celibate cleric solely for the purposes of fostering his own career. Abelard was not concerned with the way in which the marriage would impede his concentration as a philosopher and a cleric, but only with the way public knowledge of the marriage would cost his career. For Heloise, the sin of marrying was related to the harm it would do to Abelard's ability to concentrate and write philosophy. As summarized by Radice:

If her arguments are read closely it is clear that she was much less concerned with the possible loss of Abelard's services to the Church than with the betrayal of the ideal which they both admired, that of the philosopher as a man who is set apart and above human ties. . . . She points out the distractions and petty hindrances of domestic life which are inimical to philosophic contemplation, and compares the philosophers with 'those who

truly deserve the name of monks', that is, the dedicated solitaries such as John the Baptist or the ascetic sects of Jewish history.

Referring to Heloise's first letter, Radice continues

. . . a lasting relationship should rest on the complete devotion of two persons; this is true disinterested love, based on what she calls 'chastity of spirit'. To such an ideal union a legal marriage could add nothing, and the presence or absence of an erotic element is, in a sense, irrelevant. The intention towards the ideal relationship is all-important. This is the 'ethic of pure intention' in which both Abelard and Heloise believed and to which she often returns.³¹

IV. SUMMARY

Dronke, referring to the *Problemata*, says that³²

. . . Heloise should be considered not only in relation to Abelard, as has always been customary, but also in relation to other medieval women writers, to see precisely in what ways a womanly awareness comes to be expressed – and to be called in question – in her writings, and how her self-understanding compares with that of other medieval women who have left us written testimonies.

Prudence Allen³³ studies Heloise's views on women. In Allen's view, Heloise represents a curious contrast. One of the best educated and intellectually accomplished women of her time, her words clearly express views of women's inferiority to men, even though that view becomes modified over time. Yet, we can assess what Heloise says and contrast what she says to what her words reveal about her and about Abelard. Her letters reveal her teacher, her husband and her religious superior to be a man of enormous gifts and enormous shortcomings. The most brilliant philosopher of his day, Abelard could not live by the very principles he taught to Heloise. As his student, Heloise not only lived by those principles, but would have been disillusioned to realize that Abelard did not live by them. The man who fathered her child and became her husband against her better judgement cloistered his wife when marriage no longer served

his career needs, and ignored her when he could no longer advantage himself of her sexually. The priest who was Heloise's religious superior had to be scolded into finally attending to the needs of the nuns of the Paraclete.

Heloise's comments about the inferiority of women to men are explicit. But we must remember that those comments came from a philosopher who held Ciceronian views on love, and who shared Abelard's "ethic of intent." In light of her philosophical views, and in light of the life which she had led consistent with those views, Heloise's comments ought to be understood as placing a high moral value on humility expressed as so-called "feminine inferiority."

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Hamilton, *Heloise*. London: Hodder and Stoughton (1966), p. 15.
2. Petrus Abelardus, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 178: 206 CD.
3. Étienne Gilson, *Heloise and Abelard*, L.K. Shook authorized translation of *Héloïse et Abélard*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951, p. 48.
4. See Chronicle of Guillaume Godel (d.? 1173) in Molinier, ed. *Receuilles des Histoires: Les Obituaires français au moyen age*, Paris: 1880.
5. Petrus Abelardus. *PL* 178: 33.
6. Dronke, Peter. *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1984), p. 111.
7. *op. cit.*, p. 112.
8. *ibid.*
9. Dronke, citing Muckle, J.T., *Mediaeval Studies*, Vol XII, p. 173-174.
10. Peter Dronke, "Heloise's *Problemata* and *Letters*: Some Questions of Form and Content." In R. Thomas, ed., *Petrus Abaelardus, Trierer Theologische Studien*, Band 38:(1980), p. 53., hereinafter as Dronke, *Problemata*.
11. Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
12. *op. cit.*, p. 149.
13. *op. cit.*, p. 149.
14. Gilson, 151, citing Butler, D.C., *Le monachisme bénédictin* Paris: de Gigord, 1924, 144-145.
15. Dronke, *Problemata*, *op. cit.*, p. 56-57.
16. *op. cit.*, p. 57.
17. Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 47-65.
18. M. Tullius Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, xiv, xxvii. London and New York: Loeb Classical Library (1914-1949).
19. Heloise, *Epistola II*, *Patrologia Latina*: 178: 184 ff.

20. Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
21. Heloise, *op. cit.*
22. *op. cit.*
23. *Epistle II*, Radice translation, *op. cit.*, 130.
24. Heloise, *op. cit.*
25. Abelard, *Scito te ipsum*. in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 178: 640 B.
26. Heloise, *op. cit.*
27. Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 49–50.
28. Elizabeth Hamilton, *Heloise*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966, p. 42.
29. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
30. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 73.
31. Betty Radice, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, Middlesex: Penguin Books (1974), p. 17.
32. *op. cit.*, p. 54.
33. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC–AD 1250*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1985, p. 291–292.

4. Herrad of Hohenbourg

JOAN GIBSON

I. INTRODUCTION

In mid-twelfth century, moved by military and political considerations, Frederick Barbarossa restored the ruined eighth century abbey at Mt. Ste. Odile, later known as the Hohenbourg. At his request, Rilinda, the abbess of Bergen, established eight nuns there sometime between 1147–1162, placing the women under the rule of St. Augustine.² She was succeeded c. 1176 by the abbess Herrad. Details of Herrad's early life are unknown, although it seems safe to assume an aristocratic family, since a woman without noble birth is unlikely to have ruled such an important abbey. The name under which she was formerly known – Herrad of Landsberg – contributed to the presumption of nobility, but any connection to that particular family is now discredited.³ Although Herrad acknowledges that she was instructed by Rilinda's "admonitions and examples", it is not certain that Herrad was in fact a pupil of Rilinda, nor even necessarily educated at the abbey of Hohenbourg.⁴

A distinguished abbess, Herrad was active in the preservation and extension of the worldly security of the abbey. Under her rule, it continued to enjoy imperial favour, at one time sheltering an exiled royal widow and her daughters.⁵ Herrad was responsible for the gift of land and buildings where she founded a priory of Prémonstratensian monks. She later established a dozen Augustinian canons from Marbach in a substantial foundation, which included a farm, a church, a convent, a hospital for the poor and a hospice for pilgrims. The primary duties of both orders, however, were to serve the spiritual needs of the abbey, whose inhabitants numbered

around sixty before Herrad's death in 1191. The Marbach canons were especially noted for their learning and a strong spirit of reform. The spirituality of the *Hortus deliciarum* is entirely in sympathy with the new forms of piety adopted by the monks and canons.⁶

II. HORTUS DELICIARUM

A remarkable work, the *Hortus deliciarum* contains verse, prose, dialogue and music; its copious illustrations are of considerable originality and enormous beauty. It comprises over 1160 textual extracts, and in excess of 340 miniatures and full page illustrations, extending over 324 folio pages.⁷ These are complexly integrated into a unified and dynamic vision of salvation history, applied variously at the level of the cosmos, of biblical history and the church, and of the individual.⁸ Most probably, nearly all of the work was completed prior to 1185, although precise dating is difficult. Additional material and pictures seem to have been interpolated after the bulk of the work was completed – perhaps added under Herrad's direction – and a few further additions were made after her death.⁹

Herrad of Hohenbourg is known primarily as the guiding force for the composition of the *Hortus deliciarum*, though Rilinda may also have had a role in its inspiration or origin.¹⁰ Not only was Herrad's the informing intellect and imagination, but she seems also to have supervised closely the execution of the work.¹¹ Though few of the words are her own, she proudly proclaims herself as author.¹² While the title, *Hortus deliciarum*, (*Garden of Delights*), recalls the earthly paradise and the enclosed garden of the Song of Songs – both themes she employs widely – it also alludes to her work as a florilegium, or collection.¹³ The excerpts she assembles contain references to, and material drawn from, contemporary sources including the noted abbess and visionary philosopher Hildegard of Bingen, the theologian and canonist Peter the Lombard, the chronicler of sacred history Peter Comestor, and the poet Gauthier de Chatillon. An extract from a sermon of Geoffrey de St. Thierry may be from as late as the turn of the century.¹⁴ Other sections of the work derive from authors of the preceding genera-

tion, or from standard works of the Fathers or the saints. We have no record of the library upon which she must have drawn, nor do we know with any certainty who the scribes and artists responsible for the splendor of the manuscript may have been. Opinion is divided, some ascribing it to the nuns, others to the canons.¹⁵

In its early history, the manuscript appears to have been unknown outside the monastery; the first mention dates from the early sixteenth century. When Hohenbourg was abandoned following a fire, the work was transferred by mid-sixteenth century to the library of the Bishop of Strasbourg. After further travels, the manuscript was placed in the Central Registry of Strasbourg in 1803, where it became relatively well known and much admired in the scholarly world. So great was the esteem for its achievements that they were elevated almost to mythic proportions, and the author of the *Hortus deliciarum* was unofficially revered as a saint.¹⁶ The manuscript, along with the only known complete copy, was destroyed during the Prussian bombardments of Strasbourg in August, 1870.¹⁷ There remain incomplete copies of its pictures and texts, and various collections of sketches and tracings on the basis of which several attempts have been made to reconstruct the work.¹⁸ All previous efforts have been superseded by the publication, in 1979, of the edition of Rosalie Green et al., to which this discussion is heavily indebted.¹⁹

The purpose of the *Hortus deliciarum* has been much debated. Studies in the commentary of the Green edition support the view that it was largely intended to be pedagogical, and was closely associated with the community at Hohenbourg.²⁰ But even so, it is not entirely clear what audience it addressed. Certainly the religious community at Hohenbourg is intended, as Herrad states in opening and closing passages, and as the ample iconographic evidence attests. It may be especially intended for the novices, for Herrad says that in it "the troop of young women is continuously at recreation".²¹ However, there are indications, especially in material relating to marriage, that lay women may also have been considered.²²

Although there is a general agreement that the *Hortus deliciarum* is a remarkable and very important work of the late twelfth century, it is nevertheless extremely difficult to classify. It is reminiscent of the illustrated encyclopedias of the Middle Ages, which were de-

signed to display God's revelation of Himself in His creation, and to serve as exegetical aids to the understanding of Scripture. But Green emphasises the extent to which the work goes beyond encyclopedic organization, while others note that unlike the encyclopedias, which follow a generally static plan, the organization of the *Hortus deliciarum* allows for both personal and historical development.²³ In spite of encyclopedic elements, it recalls even more strongly the intellectual organization of the emergent Summa tradition of the twelfth century, the divisions of the *Sentences* of Peter the Lombard, and the order of the Apostles Creed.²⁴

Bischoff describes the work as comprising four sections treating salvation history from the standpoint respectively of the Covenant, redemption through Christ, the Church as the mystical body of Christ, and contemplation of the last ends.²⁵ Green describes it as a triptych of material from the Old Testament, the New Testament and a final didactic section on the application of the Biblical story to the Church and its members.²⁶

The work has been extensively studied by art historians and to some degree by those interested in its poems, music and even the German glosses on the Latin text. The iconography is of special interest. The *Hortus deliciarum* contains a wealth of unique, rare or early illustrations of particular scenes and motifs, and as well presents challenging problems about sources and influences.²⁷ But apart from studies of textual sources, there has been relatively less attention paid to its intellectual content.²⁸ This neglect results partly from the very incomplete state of the copies of the text, and partly from the nature of the *Hortus deliciarum* as a compilation. The consequent lack of textual originality, especially compared with the clear iconographic originality, diminished its interest. Earlier perceptions of the work as an encyclopedic compendium also hindered appreciation of the importance of Herrad's choice and thematic arrangements of texts. These indeed merit recognition, as does the still inadequately understood relationship of text and image.²⁹

Even within the framework of a compilation, Herrad rarely chooses unusual texts, although the extent of her use of contemporaries is notable. However, Herrad is far from a mere copyist. She adapts her sources quite freely and extensively, changing them where necessary to suit the context.³⁰ Her most important philosophical source is Augustine, both in his own right, and

through the voluminous borrowings of the didactic synthesizer Honorius Augustodunensis (formerly known as Honorius of Autun). Anselm and Boethius are also represented.³¹ The materials collected even from these sources are seldom explicitly philosophically speculative or dialectical. Herrad displays no extended philosophical analysis or sustained argument – even in the extracts taken from her sources – except through the arrangement of material.³² She draws in general on the less theoretical works of her chosen authors, and even when using a more theoretical work, selects the less speculative passages.

Herrad's philosophical outlook is in keeping with her chosen sources, most of whom were monks writing in an augustinian, christian platonic tradition. Her attitude toward the new secular learning of the period is one of reserve. While she seems familiar with the humanism of the twelfth century renaissance, she uses it with more caution than many in monastic, courtly and university circles. Her illustration of Ulysses and the sirens is the first known in the Middle Ages, and the accompanying text moralises the story as part of a cycle of temptations. She does not cite the pagan poets, and when she explicitly acknowledges the poets, they are placed outside the realm of divine knowledge. Nor does Herrad incorporate directly the fruits of the new research on grammar and logic which were transforming the curricula of the rising universities, although she may be aware of them.³³ She certainly knows examples of early scholastic theology, as represented by Peter the Lombard.

The *Hortus deliciarum* contains features of an extended allegory on the mystical marriage of Christ with the Christian soul, the Church, or the Virgin, of the type which became so popular following St. Bernard's writings on the Song of Songs. While generous in deploying allegory, Herrad generally avoids the more extreme and insistant elaborations often found in the twelfth century. The text is more frequently allegorical than the illustrations, and often provides allegorical explanations of images. On a few occasions, a picture has been devised to represent an allegorical text.³⁴

But while her interest is meditative and educational more than speculative, as is consistent with the monastic tradition, she does not present an elaborated antirationalism in the manner of St. Bernard. Indeed, she asserts strongly the importance of philosophy.

III. PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

When Herrad describes her task, she says that she is like the little bee of God, acting under divine inspiration, and for love of her charges, who has distilled her book into sweet honey, made with nectar culled from different flowers of Sacred Scripture and philosophical writings.³⁵ The bee-honeycomb image is perhaps a more delicate form of the bovine images favoured by the monks for describing scriptural meditation, and should alert us to Herrad's use of the extended sense of philosophy current in monasticism.

1. *Cosmology*

Herrad also reflects the philosophical preoccupations of the twelfth century monastic schools. Thus the work blends a scriptural and religious account of creation with cosmological and scientific commentary. For example, she offers a rare illustration of creation in terms of the platonic elements of air and water, and likens the risen body of Christ to a crystal.³⁶ However, such humanist interests are never pursued for their own sakes, rather they are firmly subordinated to the larger religious themes. Herrad's use of the idea of man as the microcosm is important. Embodied throughout the text, the idea occurs explicitly as part of the cycle of creation, and is illustrated both there and in a later section on judgement.³⁷ The theme of microcosm underlies her constant movement from the general to the particular and the concrete as when she passes from the account of creation to a prayer, ascribed to a local saint, Léonard de Noblat, asking for a queen's successful delivery in childbirth. He sets his prayer within a meditation on the creation of the world and the offspring of Adam and Abraham.³⁸ Herrad's emphasis on the human, communal and dynamic quality of life has often been noted and a similar emphasis on the integration of all human life is seen in her portrayal of the various estates of medieval life attempting to climb the ladder of virtue.³⁹ In this, she is at one with her contemporaries, revealing an understanding of the world based substantially on resemblances and imaging.⁴⁰ It is in this spirit that she presents the saints, but especially the virgin Mary and the holy women as those upon whom the nuns can model themselves.⁴¹

In this context, her very specific human, historical references are both important and typical. They balance her use of allegory which reveals more abstractly the continuity of human and divine, and of all human history, which is central to her work.

2. *The Nature of Philosophy*

When she turns directly to philosophy, Herrad does not approach it primarily through the written works of philosophical authors, but by offering an elaborate illustration of the nature of philosophy. She develops a sequence of texts and illustrations of the nine Muses and an allegorized figure of Philosophy as part of a consideration of the forms of knowledge instituted in the period of the Old Testament. This segment occurs after her treatment of the Old Testament account of the flood, and prior to a consideration of Old Testament idolatry. Herrad states several times that philosophy is human wisdom instituted after the flood, that is, when men had dispersed over the earth following the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel. It was then that poetry and philosophy were divided.⁴² The text immediately preceding this sequence is on three silences which follow the flood and the impious speech of the tower of Babel, periods when the proper communication between God and mankind, though disrupted, was being restored. The silence is first broken by the words of God in the revelation of the Old Testament law, then by the prophets, and finally by the unique word of the Incarnation.⁴³

(a) *Sources and Uses of Philosophy.* The arrangement heightens the impression that pious philosophy and deceitful fables represent proper and improper uses of human thought and speech in response to divine words and that they are distinguished less by their forms or methods than by their truth. Especially to be regretted is the loss of several bridging texts between the descriptions of philosophy and idolatry, including a text on the views of several philosophers concerning the nature of God, with a miniature on the idolatrous worship of nature. Another earlier text giving the order of the Muses, and linking the section on the Muses to selections on philosophy and poetry is also unfortunately lost. These might have

further clarified Herrad's view of the relation of pagan philosophy and poetry, and by extension, her view of the relation between pagan and Christian philosophy.

The presentation of the nine Muses serves as prologue to the discussion of philosophy. They are portrayed, in nine interlocking medallions as sober, fully dressed and amply veiled, without distinguishing symbols.⁴⁴ Alongside texts on the divisions of philosophy are descriptions stating that the Muses excel all others in wisdom and are sources of the unfailing abundance of knowledge. They are also called signs of the liberal arts, and their origin is given in terms of fountain and water imagery which prefigures the symbolism of the liberal arts in the philosophy section.

The double inscriptions on the illustration of the Muses identifies them both as qualities of mind and as parallel steps in the process from learning doctrine to expressing it. The stages are the acquisition of knowledge, dedication to learning, meditation, understanding, memory, comparison, judgment, choice and good expression.⁴⁵ It has also been suggested that the Muses represent intellectual faculties.⁴⁶ In this Herrad shows affinities with other twelfth century authors eager to delineate and classify the powers of the soul, especially insofar as they make possible knowledge of God.⁴⁷ Far from treating the Muses as artistic or poetic inspiration, Herrad consistently assimilates them to sound understanding and to the description which follows of philosophic knowledge in the liberal arts. The Muses thus indicate the inner discipline to be cultivated in order to approach the study of the philosophic arts.

(b) *Content of Philosophy.* Herrad portrays Philosophy herself under the guise of a wisdom symbol, informing and nourishing all knowledge through the seven liberal arts.⁴⁸ In the full-page illustration, Philosophy sits in the center of a large medallion encircled by an arcade in whose arched niches stand traditional figures of the arts.⁴⁹ Philosophy wears a tripartite crown bearing inscriptions which show the three platonic divisions of philosophy – logic, ethics and physics. She holds a scroll stating that all wisdom comes from God, and that only the wise can do as they desire.⁵⁰ The divine origin of Philosophy is further stressed by the inscription which indicates that the Holy Spirit invented the arts, and the encircling inscription of the inner composition which states “Ruling by art

things divinely inspired, I Philosophy divide the subject arts into seven parts".⁵¹ From her breast flow seven streams toward the allegorical maidens who also represent the arts. They are included within a larger circular inscription which indicates that the arts are the fruits of their investigations of pagan philosophy, written down and preserved for their pupils.⁵² Each allegorical figure bears a sign of her art, and it may be significant that while the iconography is generally practical, dialectic alone is shown symbolically. The head of a barking dog emerges from her sleeve in an ambiguous portrayal. The inscription for dialectic says "I let arguments attack, like dogs."⁵³

(c) *Teaching and Learning Philosophy*. The philosophers Socrates and Plato sit writing within the circle of the allegorized arts, below the throne of Philosophy. The teachings of the philosophers are here divided into ethics, physics and rhetoric. The philosophers are said to be the wise of the world and the learned of the nations.⁵⁴ Below the circular composition sit a row of four unnamed poets and magicians, who receive inspiration from black birds.⁵⁵ The inscription and accompanying text make clear that these are the inventors of fables of the false Gods.⁵⁶ Their unsanctioned knowledge does not derive from a true art – the divinely inspired knowledge which is available to both pagan and Christian. Philosophy is repeatedly described as the investigation of nature, and as the love of wisdom, while the philosophers are those who love her.⁵⁷ There is a strong emphasis on the importance of an orderly development of teaching and learning in the acquisition of true knowledge; it is spelled out clearly in the facing texts which link philosophy to the liberal arts, so called because they liberate the mind from the cares of the world, and set it free for knowledge of the creator.⁵⁸ The arts thus have an important place in teaching contempt of the world. Such detachment is one of the central messages of the *Hortus deliciarum*, expressed in the opening and closing poems and at intervals throughout the work; philosophy and the arts are crucial to this task.

(d) *The Nature and Sources of Ethics*. The trivium is derived from the logical part of philosophy, associated with Aristotle, while the quadrivium follows from physics, or natural philosophy, associated

with Pythagoras. Within the trivium, dialectic is said to be that which separates the true from the false.⁵⁹ Ethics is not directly related here to any of the arts, but is said to be that which repels vice and induces virtue – defined as the Socratic virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. Ethics is also divided into the practical and speculative, that is, the active and contemplative life.⁶⁰ The exercise of raising the mind to God through understanding and meditation, which is illustrated here, is itself the practice of the contemplative life. Consequently this entire section can be seen as giving a form of speculative ethics, or right ordering of the inner life. The fuller treatment of practical ethics is presented in the famous psychomachia sequence which occurs as part of the transition from the section on the New Testament to that on the Church.⁶¹ In the personified battle of the virtues and vices, Herrad gives a more detailed investigation of the nature of virtue and vice, with their oppositions and affinities.⁶² Interestingly, these important scenes are unaccompanied by text. It has been noted that here, as in the ladder of virtue, Herrad displays the dynamic and human qualities of her subject, rather than a more abstract and theoretical examination of morality. While a more abstract understanding is afforded by static illustrations of the medallion type – to which the pictures of Philosophy and the Muses belong – she eschews this form in the psychomachia.⁶³ The relations between understanding and moral action are shown briefly by Herrad through a text explicating the parable of the servants entrusted with silver talents. The talent given by the Holy Spirit is human understanding, and the further talents earned signify the dedication of the whole person, through the five senses, and good works. The servant who does not understand the good and bring forth greater good in actions, is rightly punished.⁶⁴

(e) *Knowledge and the Soul.* While Herrad explicitly accords Philosophy the role of wisdom, investigating all things human and divine, her respect and love of learning is evident elsewhere as well. Some of the more sophisticated applications of philosophy occur in the discussions of knowledge, and the human soul. She follows a generally augustinian approach to the mind as an image of the Trinity.⁶⁵ Her interest extends to human, angelic, and divine knowledge, and the knowledge of the separated souls.⁶⁶ Her approach to

human nature and epistemology is active and optimistic. If the discussions do not encompass lengthy technical analyses, they nevertheless presuppose an audience capable of understanding and meditating on the role of knowledge in the service of salvation. It is to this purpose that Herrad's book appears to be dedicated, and it is this intellectual task which the glorious pictures, the poems and the music seem designed to further.

IV. SUMMARY

Herrad's most original contribution may be as an educator and spiritual director whose frequent focus on women is not yet fully explored.⁶⁷ Among her contemporaries, Herrad may perhaps most usefully be compared to Alain de Lille, for her artistic presentation of philosophy, her didacticism and eclecticism, and her moral fervour. Among medieval women, Christine Pisan seems her nearest kin in artistry and breadth of interest and in dedication to instructing women. In the beauty, the grand sweep and cosmic scope of her project, Herrad can be compared with Dante. God's little bee has shown an artistic, moral and philosophical journey to God.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the award of a General Research Grant. I am also very grateful for the valuable research assistance of Maureen Riffin. I owe a special debt of gratitude to M.P. Hogan, Leslie Sanders and J.G. Dimond for reading and commenting on earlier drafts.
2. Christine Bischoff "L'Histoire", in the *Hortus deliciarum of Herrad of Hohenbourg*, ed. Rosalie Green, Michael Evans, Christine Bischoff, and Michael Curschmann, vol. 1, *Commentary*, pp. 9–10. Subsequent references to chapters in the *Commentary* will be given under the author's name, while vol. 2, *Reconstruction*, will be referred to as *Hortus*.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
4. For earlier views on this and other matters, see Lina Eckenstein, *Woman Under Monasticism*, pp. 238–55.
5. Sibylle, widow of King Tancred of Sicily, had been exiled by Henry VI, Bischoff, *Commentary*, p. 12.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
7. For the difficulties of enumerating the illustrations, see Green, *ibid.*, p. 23; of the texts, see Evans, *ibid.*, p. 6–7.
8. Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 41–42.
9. Evans, *ibid.*, p. 4; Green, *ibid.*, pp. 25, 32.
10. Bischoff and Green seem to favour the view that there may have been a significant influence, *ibid.*, pp. 12, 24–25; one earlier scholar doubts that any woman at all could have been responsible, cited Green, p. 25, n. 21.
11. Curschmann, *ibid.*, p. 73, Green, *ibid.*, pp. 31–32, Bischoff, *ibid.*, p. 43.
12. Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 57–59, *Hortus*, p. 4.
13. Bischoff, *Commentary*, pp. 37–38, indicates other uses of the garden motif readily available to the medieval mind.
14. For a complete list of sources, and description of the major sources, see Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 43–61.
15. Bischoff feels some form of intellectual collaboration with the canons is indicated, *ibid.*, p. 11, while Green writing on the miniatures, and Curschmann, on the glosses, allow for a female artist and scribe, *ibid.*, pp. 31, 69. Brown, writing on the paleography, assumes the hand is by a male scribe.
16. Green, *ibid.*, p. 18.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.
18. On the inadequacies of the materials for a thorough reconstruction, see *ibid.*, pp. 17–22. Green indicates that even complete understanding of the structure may be lost.
19. For a review of the sources for a reconstruction, see Evans, *ibid.*, pp. 4–8, for a review of previous reconstructions, see Green, *ibid.*, p. 21.
20. Evidence is drawn from the nature of the sources, especially the generous use of Honorius who wrote for the instruction of his brethren, and from the poems, Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 46, 58–59, from the glosses, Curschmann, *ibid.*, pp. 73–74, from the comparative informality of the paleography, Brown, *ibid.*, pp. 83–84, 85, from the nature of the art and text, Bischoff, *ibid.*, p. 37, and from the superimposition of text on image, Green, *ibid.*, p. 29, as well as the section on marriage.
21. *Hortus*, p. 4.
22. There is no firm evidence of an external school, but cf. Bischoff, *Commentary*, pp. 13, 51, 59. The material on the sacrament of marriage contains a lengthy practical section on marriage legislation and morality, drawn from Peter the Lombard, *Hortus*, pp. 476–481.
23. On the limitations of viewing it as an encyclopedia see Green, *Commentary*, pp. 24–30, but cf. Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 41–43, who highlights the way in which the text does have encyclopedic digressions.
24. Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 38–42, Green, *ibid.*, pp. 25–29.
25. Bischoff, *Ibid.*, p. 41.
26. Bischoff, *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 28–29.
27. On the iconographic sources, see Green, *ibid.*, pp. 32–36, for a partial list of rarities, *ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

28. See Bischoff, *ibid.*, pp. 37–59; Gérard Cames, *Allégories et Symboles* is the most ambitious study.
29. Green, *Commentary*, p. 29.
30. Bischoff, *ibid.*, p. 43.
31. See note 14.
32. Cames, *Allégories*, pp. 111–124, shows her use of balance and opposition in arrangement.
33. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman*, p. 321.
34. Green, *Commentary*, pp. 35–36.
35. *Hortus*, p. 4.
36. On the elements, see Green, *Commentary* p. 91, on Christ as a crystal, *Hortus*, p. 292; the text accompanying the illustration of Ulysses omits glosses into German of a large number of technical nautical terms, *Hortus*, p. 364, Cur-schman, *Commentary*, p. 68, but, the terms for natural phenomena associated with the elements are glossed, *Hortus*, pp. 24–28.
37. Green, *Commentary*, pp. 96, 221, *Hortus*, pp. 30, 440.
38. Bischoff, *Commentary*, p. 53, *Hortus*, p. 15.
39. Caroline Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, frontispiece and pp. 264–65. See also Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art*, pp. 24–25. Herrad is insistent on the integration of all humanity among the elect, *Hortus*, pp. 447–453, in the assembly of the faithful, *ibid.*, p. 420, in the Church, *ibid.*, pp. 370–378, and in the celestial court, *ibid.*, pp. 412–15, 417, 419, 427–429.
40. Robert Javelet, “Image de Dieu et nature au XIIe siècle”, gives a good brief summary of twelfth century approaches to this theme.
41. *Hortus*, pp. 2, 506, 301, 309.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 52, 56.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
44. They thus resemble less the allegorical arts of the Philosophy picture than Herrad’s portrayal of the nuns of Hohenbourg, *Hortus*, p. 505, or the virtues in the medallions around the pictures of Christ and the spiritual sacrifices of the New Testament, *ibid.*, pp. 111–112.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–56, Green, *Commentary*, p. 103.
46. Straub-Keller, Caratzas ed., *Herrad of Landsberg*, p. 34, Allen, *Concept*, p. 320.
47. Bernard McGinn, *Three Treatises on the Soul*, gives other examples of monastic literature on the soul prior to the Aristotelian revival. See esp. pp. 40–45, 50–52, 54–55, 57–59, 76–85.
48. The depiction seems to owe more to wisdom literature and arts iconography than to Boethius’ Lady Philosophy, Green, *ibid.*, pp. 104–06.
49. On the use of this iconographic type as an incompletely understood, but established allegory of learning, see Green, *ibid.* The arcade may refer to the pillars of wisdom, and the circular shape either to the temple of Solomon or the table of philosophy, or both. Cf. Cames, *Allégories* pp. 15–18.
50. This may relate to the argument derived from Plato, through Boethius in the

Consolation of Philosophy, IV, prose 2, that only the virtuous and wise can achieve their desires.

51. Green, *Commentary*, p. 104, *Hortus*, p. 57.
52. On the somewhat unusual symbols of the arts, see Green, *ibid.*, p. 106.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 104, *Hortus*, pp. 52–54, 57, texts and illustration.
54. *Hortus*, p. 57, Green, *Commentary*, p. 104.
55. This parodies divine inspiration, as with Gregory or Jerome and the dove, Green, *Commentary*, p. 106. Elsewhere, Herrad contrasts magical works with true miracles, and condemns auguries, etc., *Hortus*, pp. 310–312ff.
56. Green, *Commentary*, p. 104, *Hortus*, p. 56. Similar thoughts are expressed in selections from the *Itinerario Clementis*, *ibid.*, pp. 487–88.
57. *Hortus*, pp. 52, 54, 56, Green, *Commentary*, p. 106.
58. *Hortus*, p. 54.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–54.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 326–336, Green, *Commentary*, pp. 190–196.
62. Cames, *Allégories*, pp. 54–73; note Green's caution, *Commentary*, p. 190. See also Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories*, especially pp. 10–13, 24.
63. *Ibid.*, and p. vii. Katzenellenbogen claims that in both types of representation, Herrad "extends and clarifies" the imagery.
64. *Hortus*, pp. 179–80.
65. See for example, *ibid.*, pp. 38–40.
66. For example, on angels and the human mind knowing the Trinity, *ibid.*, p. 11, on God's knowledge of creation, p. 15, on the knowledge of the separated souls, pp. 213–214, 449.
67. Allen, *Concept*, has drawn attention to Herrad's treatment of the sexes, pp. 317–19, and her use of women as soldiers, p. 328. A significant proportion of Herrad's unique or unusual pictures represent women. This aspect deserves further attention.

5. Beatrice of Nazareth

CORNELIA WOLFSKEEL

I. BIOGRAPHY

Beatrice (Beatrijs) was born in Tienen¹ in a well to do family at the beginning of the 13th century. She died in 1268 at the Cistercian convent Nazareth,² of which she had become prioress in 1236. Her biography appeared not much later than 1268. Although the author of this biography is uncertain, Willem of Afflighem, the author of *The Life of St. Lutgardis*, is mentioned.³ The author of Beatrice's *Life* obtained his materials from the sisters of Nazareth, particularly from sister Christina. He also obtained some data from an autobiographical work by Beatrice herself, the *Liber vitae suae* (*Book of her own life*), which unfortunately has not survived. A shortened biography, *Quinque prudentes virgines* (*Five wise virgins*) contains much of Beatrice's major work *Van seven manieren van heiliger Minnen* (*The Seven Modes of Sacred Love*), and was written later by Henriques (1603).

Beatrice was born in 1200 or in 1205, the daughter of Barthelomeus and Gertrudis. Her mother died when she was still very young. Her rich father provided for his young daughter's education, as his wife had done when she was still alive. After the death of his wife, Barthelomeus sent the very young Beatrice to the 'beghinae'⁴ (beguines) in Zoutleeuw to be educated in all Christian virtues. He also sent her to be educated in the "liberal arts"⁵ at the latin school in Zoutleeuw.⁶ She remained with the beguinae for one year, and then became "oblata" in a Cistercian convent named Bloemendaal which her father had founded earlier. She was very eager to become a nun and became a novice in 1215. After complet-

ing her novitiate, she was sent to the convent Rameia to learn the *ars scriptoria*.

1. *Early Mystical Experiences*

It was at Rameia that Beatrice received her first vision in 1217. She was contemplating the following words (said by the antiphone at the reading of the psalter) when she was taken into raptures and, according to *Vita* 54, saw the Holy Trinity with the eyes of her soul:

God has sent His Son into the likeness of the sinful flesh (into the sinful flesh to be like us) to save us all because of His very great Love, with which he has loved us.

Beatrice remained very highspirited for some time following this vision. It was in Rameia that she met Ida of Nijvel (Nivelles) who became her elder spiritual leader for many years. Beatrice returned to Bloemendaal about the year 1217 but suffered a severe depression which lasted until September 14th of that year (*Vita* 64). Then, it is reported, on the day of the elevation of the cross, Beatrice's spirit was elevated by the grace of God (*Vita* 73).

From September 14, 1217 until 1225 she experienced a period of inner illumination (*Vita* 74–75), during which she was preparing herself to experience the presence of Christ. In 1221 she left for the newly founded convent of Maagdendaal, together with other nuns of Bloemendaal. There, in 1225, it is reported that she was placed into the arms of Christ during Communion. Beatrice is considered to have reached the *status proficientium* (state of those who are making progress) during which she was elevated and brought together with the Seraphins. This special grace, it is reported, delivered her from the “dark night with temptation” she had experienced during the three years preceding November 1231 (*Vita* 182–183). This vision is considered one of the heights of her mystical life, because in it she directly experiences God. This marks the beginning of the *status perfectionis* (*Vita* 170–173). In this vision, God made her certain that she was specially chosen by Him. It is also promised to her that she will never suffer⁷ so greatly in soul or body that she would want to die; her yearning for everlasting joy of

heavenly life (*Vita* 180) would be the only reason she will long for death in the future. From that time, her service to God would be without fear. Prior to this time, fear had played an important part in her spiritual life. The biographer reports (*Vita* 161), that Beatrice once suddenly heard Christ's voice promising her that she would be unified with Him forever.⁸ In spite of that promise, she remained fearful until the vision in which she was unified with the Seraphins. Some time after this vision, Beatrice is considered to have reached the *status perfectionis* (state of perfection) (*Vita* 189–192).

2. Trinitarian Visions

On January 7, 1232, Beatrice again experienced Christ's embrace during Holy Communion. This experience marked the beginning of her desire to be dissolved from the body, a desire accompanied by yearning for the Holy Trinity. At Christmas, 1233 she received another vision⁹ of the Trinity (*Vita* 215), followed by an *orewoet* (*furor aestus*) which lasted six weeks. Some time after February, 1234, a second vision of the Trinity (*Vita* 219–222) revealed to her mysteries of divine and human life. In this vision, she was drawn into the great abyss of God's judgments and allowed to see the causes of things emanating from the well of eternal justice. Through divine enlightenment, she recognized that all things were created by the power of the Father, ruled by the wisdom of the Son, and continued by the clemency of the Holy Spirit. She remained ill for more than a year following this vision. During this illness, she was completely deprived of her own will (*Vita* 225–228) which was completely "transfused" into the will of God. In May, 1236 following her recovery, Beatrice went to Nazareth accompanied by her sisters Christina and Sybilla, who were also Cistercian nuns. She was elected prioress in July of the following year, a post which she efficiently filled until her death in 1268.

3. Love of God and Love of Self in the Visions

Beatrice's biographer mentions two other visions (*Vita* 234). He tells us that when Beatrice had been prioress of Nazareth for some

time, she was allowed to see the world at her feet in the shape of a wheel. Upon hearing one of the nuns quoting St. Bernard of Clairvaux' words that many suffered torment for Christ, but very few wanted to love themselves for His sake, Beatrice prayed for a true understanding of Bernard's words. Then, taken into raptures, she saw the entire machinery of this world in the shape of a wheel or a sphere placed at her feet, and herself standing above it. In this vision, she was fixing her eyes in contemplation of the incomprehensible essence of the Godhead, looking with the eyes of her mind at what she described as the highest, uncreated, eternal and true God who is the Lord, in His majestic substance. By this Beatrice understood, at least momentarily, that she, being between God and the world, was restored to that purity and freedom of spirit in which she was originally created.¹⁰ Following this vision she remembered the experience, but no longer relived it. However, she reports that her mind's eyes were purified, and it was clear to her why one should love oneself for Christ's sake.

Beatrice's biographer also reports other visions prompted by meditation, or by worship. For example, when meditating on the wounds of Christ, Beatrice saw blood from Christ's wounds stream into her soul and clean her of the dirt of sin. On another occasion, during the elevation of communion (representing the Body of Christ) at Mass, she experiences a ray of incomprehensible clarity, like a flash of lightning emitted from the communion. And on yet another occasion while praying, she was answered by Christ:

*Foedus ineamus, pactum pangamus, ut decetero non dividamur, sed veraciter uniamur*¹¹

This auditory experience was followed by an experience of Christ's embrace. Beatrice understood by these experiences that she had become the bride of Christ. However, fear of failing in the service of Christ filled her and remained until the aforementioned 1231 vision of the Seraphins.

Beatrice's life as a Cistercian nun¹² was filled with religion, Latin studies and the creative act of writing. According to the *Vita*¹³ she was very interested in the Trinitarian mystery and read extensively on this subject, including Augustine's *De Trinitate*.¹⁴ Her life, like that of the "worldly" Hadewych of Antwerp, was directed towards

the mystical contemplation of God. She thought the realization of this contemplation possible during man's earthly life. The main topic of her writings is the process through which the contemplation of God can be realized. Thus, Beatrice offers a description of epistemological and metaphysical aspects of religious cognitive and experiential knowledge. The special stage of mystical love in which the *orewoet* (*furor aestus*) appears, made her suffer immensely. When in that state, she wanted to hide herself from the other nuns so that they might not witness the physical state accompanying the enjoyment of God. The weakness of her health, worsened by an exaggerated asceticism,¹⁵ seems to have caused some additional physical manifestations¹⁶ of her mystical experiences. However, poor health did not prevent her fulfilling many years' duties of prioress in a very strict order. In spite of her weak constitution and rather shy character, Beatrice devoted her life to experiencing unification with Christ. The description of the path toward contemplation and unification is contained in *Seven Manieren van Minne* (*Seven Modes of Sacred Love*) which details the richness of the mystical experience, and permits a philosophical explication of the importance of visionary life.

II. WORKS

The manuscripts of Beatrice's writings, including her biography by an unknown author, are in Brussels, one manuscript is in Ghent, and another is in Vienna.¹⁷ Only *The Seven Modes of Sacred Love* has survived in its complete form, although it is likely that the description of the seventh mode has suffered interpolations by a copyist. (See my discussion at the end of part II, section 1.)

1. *The Seven Modes of Sacred Love*

The following description of Beatrice's account of mystical experience gives us insights into her epistemological and metaphysical views of the connection between intellectual and sensory knowledge, and the relationship between cognitive and physical experience of the essence of God.¹⁸ In this description, I follow the

Dutch text.¹⁹ Consequently, we are not dependent on the biographer's version of the text. The biographer's version in his Latin translation of *The Seven Modes of Sacred Love* is contained in the 14th chapter of Book II of the *Vita*. The author of the biography confesses himself to have coloured (*latino eloquio coloravi*) Beatrice's writing with latin rhetoric (*Vita*, Prologus, nr. 4.) and even to have omitted what he considered to be beyond the understanding of those who were not educated in mysticism. This is consistent with the custom of Cistercian hagiography of the early 13th century. Comparison of the biographer's Latin rhetoric in *Vita*, 14, with the Dutch text gives us a clear understanding of how the biographer proceeded with the creation of his edition of Beatrice's other writings, which are lost except in the biographer's version.

(a) *The First Mode*. Divine Love puts a purifying love in the soul which now wants to recover and reestablish the state of purity, liberty and nobility in which it was originally made in God's image and likeness. According to the first mode, the soul starts struggling to regain its original perfection. Now it is longing for a greater and superior love, and for a more intimate knowledge of God. The soul wants once again to be able to serve God in free conscience, with a pure mind and with clear, unobscured reason.

(b) *The Second Mode*. The soul is seeking Love. It wants to serve God for Love's sake only, in an unselfish way, and without asking any reward. The soul wants to be Love's faithful servant in every possible way, beyond human understanding. It wants to please the Lord with all which it is, and it enjoys discovering what it can do or suffer to make a contribution to the honorable service of Love. Here, the influence of the chivalrous romances is particularly clear, especially when the soul is compared to a noble maid who serves her beloved Lord with great love.

(c) *The Third Mode*. In the third mode, the soul tries to love God more than any other creature. It suffers from painful desire for the complete service of Love. It is desiring what it cannot achieve except by God's own grace. This mode is characterized by the soul's painful suffering from feelings of failure and imperfection in its service of Love.

(d) *The Fourth Mode*. This is the stage when the grace of God has thrown itself into the soul. The soul remains passive, and is “eaten” by God. In this stage the *gherinen* (the state of being touched by God) takes place. Both body and soul suffer from God who has thrown His love into the soul. On the one hand, being touched by God is a pleasure for the soul; on the other, it also means spiritual and physical suffering, including the loss by the soul of control over the body’s senses and limbs.

(e) *The Fifth Mode*. The preceding stage changes into that of the *orewoet* (*furor aestus*). The soul suffers because divine Love becomes a raging raving storm in it. The soul experiences Love as an all-devouring fire. The body is also involved; the veins seem open, blood seems to be set afire, the marrow appears to soften, legs seem to be weak, the breast and throat feel dry. The face and limbs consequently experience the internal tumult of Love. The heart is pierced by an arrow which continues through the throat to the brain. Those experiencing this mode fear loss of their wits. However, the soul is nourished and the mind uplifted because Love is so far beyond all reason and intelligence that the soul cannot obtain the *gebrukelicheit* – the eventual enjoyment of Love. The more the soul is given from above, the more it requires. The more the soul is wounded, the more it is cured.

(f) *The Sixth Mode*. In the sixth stage the soul totally surrenders itself to victorious Love. It wishes that God would allow everyone to experience this state of mind. It knows that it is permitted to enjoy God in peace and certainty. Beatrice begins the description of the sixth mode by saying:

When the bride of the Lord has made further progression and has risen higher to a greater strength, she comes to the experience of another mode of love in a more excellent condition and in deeper understanding.

In the sixth mode the soul is totally conquered by Love and can enjoy Love in peace. Now the soul experiences God’s power, His clear purity, His spiritual sweetness, His desirable freedom and His discerning Wisdom. Now it knows, Beatrice says, of the sweet

entrance to our Lord and an intimate knowledge of God. In this mode, the soul is likened to a house-wife who has governed her own house well (Proverbs). In this mode the soul is Love and Love powerfully reigns within it. Now all fear has gone. However, all those who want to reach Love must seek Love with fear, follow Love with faith and, with ardent desire, occupy themselves with Love. Once a person has reached the sixth mode, there is freedom of conscience, sweetness of the heart, goodness of the senses, nobility of soul, and superiority of mind: this is the beginning of eternal life. Beatrice completes the description of the sixth mode by calling this mode

. . . a life, like that of the angels, only to be followed by the eternal life, which God may give to us all.

(g) *The Seventh Mode*. The seventh stage of love is that of the *cupio dissolvi*, (VII, 61) (in which the soul expresses the desire to be dissolved from the body).²⁰ In this stage the soul wants to lose itself totally in the eternal Love. It experiences earthly life as a prison, as exile from life in its true home, heaven.²¹ The soul wants to remain with the Seraphins in heaven and enjoy eternal heavenly life. It suffers another *orewoet* (*furor aestus*) and wants to transcend itself, and become totally lost in the eternal Being of God. It wants to follow Love and to know and to enjoy Love forever. But this is impossible on earth, so the soul strives for heavenly unification with its Bridegroom. The desire to be unified forever with eternal love is the background of the *cupio dissolvi* (Rom. VII, 61). However, it is clear from the visions mentioned in the *Vitae* and from the Sixth mode that Beatrice, like Hadewych, but unlike St. Bernard of Clairvaux, considered the mystical contemplation of God possible during life on earth.

The visions mentioned by the biographer in the third book of the *Vita* clearly show that Beatrice had reached the state of the highest contemplation of God, a state comparable to the "spiritual wedding" of Juan de la Cruz.²² The visions described in the third book of the *Vita* are all accompanied by the peace and quiet which are characteristics of the highest contemplation of God. Here the question arises; why was the highest contemplation of God, which Beatrice had experienced, omitted in the seventh mode? The most

likely explanation is that the copyist of the original manuscript changed Beatrice's original text of the Seventh Mode into a version that would be more acceptable to those Cistercians who, as followers of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, did not believe that the highest contemplation of God was possible during life on earth. I must agree with Reypens²³ in concluding that the surviving text includes copyist's interpolations of the original text in the section on the seventh mode. This would explain the qualitative difference between the richness and completeness of Beatrice's descriptions of the preceding six modes, and the unevenness of the description of the seventh mode.

2. *Lost Works*

Beatrice's lost works are assumed by van Mierlo²⁴ to be the basis of those described by the author of the biography. There are eight lost works and two prayers described in the biography, in addition to the biographer's version of *Seven Modes of Sacred Love*.

(a) *De frequentatione et exercitio temporis*. (On the intensive use of time), (*Vita* II, 2.) is, according to the biographer,²⁵ an account of how through divine grace, Beatrice learned to make a good and intensive use of time. There is time for study, meditation, and also time to allow other nuns to share her spiritual gifts and to be instructed by Beatrice in the ways of mystical life. Through God's mercy, Beatrice learned to no longer be overwhelmed by her duties, and learned how to use the many gifts God had given her.

(b) *De triplici exercitio spiritualium affectuum*. (On the threefold exercise of spiritual affections) (*Vita* II, 3.) Beatrice expresses her desire to be an obedient servant of God. She has three concerns in that regard. Her first concern is to satisfy for her own sins. Her second concern is for pious gratitude for all the benefits bestowed upon her by God. Her third concern is to promote God's will and honor in obedience to love. Beatrice tries to give God satisfaction for her sins by a life of penance and trial. However, she becomes aware that this is insufficient to make her an example of God's honor and glory. After a month of self-castigation, she decides to

demonstrate her pious gratitude for God's benefits bestowed upon her, and concentrates all the power of her love on acknowledging those benefits. She thanks God for creating her in His image and considers this a natural gift. She is grateful for Baptism which she considers a gift of grace which she has in common with all Christians. But she is most thankful that God has brought her into the "harbour of peace and quiet of the convent," something she considers a special gift of divine grace. However, in this state of mind, as in the previous state, she is still full of fear of God. Only in the third state of mind does this fear disappear. Then a great yearning for God and a desire to fulfill His will captures her. At one time, thanks to the sweetness of divine Love, she is introverted, turned towards her own inner life; at another, she is ill from the insatiableness of her great desire and is afflicted by conflicting emotions which are harmful to her body. She languishes during those days of illness. Then, she says, God changes this state for the better.

(c) *De duabus cellis quas in corde suo constituit.* (On the two cells which she constructed in her heart (*Vita* II, 5.) Beatrice here describes the two cells which she constructed in her heart against half-heartedness and inconstancy.) In the lower cell she locked the memory of all her sins and negligences, together with all that could possibly humiliate her, and what she identifies as the six weaknesses of human nature. This measure was directed against inconstancy, for Beatrice intended to cure her heart of this illness by the opposite emotion. The weaknesses of human nature characterize human life through (1) the impress of sinfulness, (2) the susceptibility of *passiones*,²⁶ (3) by instability and perpetual changes, (4) continuous misery on earth, (5) the obscurity of the Truth, and (6) mortality. These miseries of human nature remind Beatrice of the misery of human life and her own condition of misery and sinfulness in order that she could expel the disease of inconstancy by the opposite intention. Beatrice filled the upper cell of her heart with all God's natural and supernatural benefits, so that the memory of God's goodness could protect her against half-heartedness.

(d) *De quinque speculis cordis sui.* (On the five mirrors of her own heart) (*Vita* II, 6.) According to the biographer, Beatrice describes five mirrors of her own heart. The first mirror is of heaven above

her: when it is looked into, an exhortation to live a virtuous life is seen. When the second mirror of the earth beneath is looked into, she always sees the humility and unworthiness of earthly life. However, the third mirror shows her how she must love her neighbours and practice love of neighbour. The fourth mirror is Jesus Christ on the cross, His arms stretched out; it instructs her in compassion and sacrifice. The fifth mirror is the mirror of the always-present memory of death. Its reminder of death frightens her with the thought of the Last Judgment. It induces her to patience, humility, obedience and moral stability.

(e) *De monasterio spirituali*. (On the Spiritual Convent) (*Vita* II, 7 and 8.) This is another allegory of spiritual life in which Beatrice has built a convent in her own heart and God is the abbot. Reason takes the place of the abbess. Through the power of His strength God saves the convent he has founded. Love and the yearning for the spiritual life are God's fellow-workers; Wisdom is prioress, Caution (prudence) is sub-prioress, Love of neighbour is the Cellararia (in charge of finances), Compassion is the servant of the sick, Gratitude and Faithfulness are the singers, Faith and Hope are the vergers (in charge of the sacristy). Prayer must always be present at the altar. Sobriety and Patience are in charge of the refectory. Concern takes care of all details. Chastity guards the windows. The power of Discernment takes care of the guests. Providence (providential caution) is present at the gate, guarded by Humility and Obedience. Each night after complines, Beatrice summoned all of the virtues of her spiritual convent before the court of her own conscience.

It is important to note that this spiritual exercise evidences the important place of reason (*ratio*) in Beatrice's mystical life, a feature in common with Hadewych of Antwerp. It is reason that in the role of abbess follows God, the abbot of the convent. Reason supervises the other virtues. *Vita* II, 8, describes another exercise which could replace the above-mentioned when that exercise was too difficult to complete. In this substitute exercise, only Humility and Obedience, the two guardians of the convent, remain.

Beatrice tried all means of acquiring self-knowledge and it is this self-knowledge that gave her insight into her own unworthiness. It is from within herself that she discovers the reason for practicing

the virtue of humility. Humility makes her humble and kind towards all her fellow-sisters whom she always honours. It is through humility that she gains tolerance and patience and becomes ready to gladly and joyfully obey orders from any of her sisters whether they are senior or junior in age, superior or inferior in office to her.

(f) *De orto*²⁷ *fructifero cordis suo*. (On the fruitful garden of her own heart) (*Vita* II, 9.) In this allegory, Beatrice compares her heart to a garden. Sister Providentia²⁸ is the porter of this garden and must weed the weeds and sow the seeds of the trees and flowers of all the virtues. Confession of sins fertilizes the soil of her garden.

(g) *De eo quod ad cognitionem sui ipsius omnimodam aspiravit*. (On her aspiration to achieve self-knowledge) (*Vita*, II, 10.) It is not clear whether the contents of this chapter were originally a treatise by Beatrice, or not. The reader is told of her aspiration for self-knowledge, a subject also discussed in *The spiritual convent*. The intent of this chapter is to stress the natural talents and gifts of the human soul. The natural gifts of the soul are (1) *nobilis illa superbia* (that noble pride) which makes us loathe all that is low, and aspire for the higher; (2) *subtilitas* (subtlety) and *acumen ingenii*, (a sharp mind), which both promote the soul's contemplation of heavenly things; (3) *simplicitas*, (simplicity), which makes the soul have a single strong desire, that for the Highest Good (Summum Bonum);²⁹ (4) *innata severitas* (inborn severity) which makes the soul detest all vices, (5) *quieta tranquillitas* (peaceful quiet of the heart) which is the counterpart of the *innata severitas* and which makes the soul cautious not to disturb or torment others.

These are the most important natural gifts, but there are others, including *gratiositas* (gracefulness), *largitas* (liberality), *habilitas* (proficiency) and *affabilitas* (affability). These God-given talents must be used in spiritual and ascetic life and are not to be neglected. Neglecting the natural gifts leads to pollution of the soul by sin. All these abilities are originally part of the nature of the soul. It is the aim of human life to discover and practice them again with the help and grace of God.

(g) *De quadam ordinatione vitae spiritualis quam aliquanto tempore exercuit*. (On a certain rule of spiritual life which she kept for some

time) (*Vita*, II, 11.) This work describes a rule of life which Beatrice kept. Every hour of the day has its own particular “office” – a devotional or contemplative practice. Beatrice used to rise early, before the beginning of matins (which she always attended). She prepared herself for matins by prayer and meditation. At Mass she turned her complete attention to the eucharistic sacrifice of the Lord’s body. (God had once given her the task of interceding in prayerful humility as a supplicant for all faithful Christians when the Eucharist was elevated.) So she became a supplicant for all faithful Christians, especially at this hour in the morning. When there was time left before the third hour, she spent it immersed in prayer. From the third until the sixth hour she contemplated the *Passion of Christ*. From the sixth to the ninth hour she tried to live according to Jesus’ words in the Gospel, “Learn from me, that I am meek and humble of heart.” From the ninth hour until vespers she thanked God on behalf of all His creatures, and in particular, on behalf of the “chosen” for all His benefits. In this state she was aware that gratitude on her own behalf was insufficient, so she thanked God for everything she had accomplished or endured during that day. After vespers she conducted a self-examination to discover what she had been lacking in during that day, and to promise God to do penance for any negligence. After the completes, Beatrice entrusted her heart to the heart of her Beloved. Feeling cured by the sweetness of His love, she slept with a pure mind and peaceful conscience. According to the biographer, Beatrice kept this rule of life until God asked her to change it.

In addition to his latin translation of the *Seven Modes of Sacred Love* and the eight preceding works, the biographer recounts two prayers by Beatrice, “O Domine juste,” (Oh, righteous Lord) and “O justissime, O potentissime Deus,” (Oh, most righteous and almighty God).

III. CONCLUSION

It is clear that Beatrice must be considered among the most important mystics of the 13th century in the Low Countries. Beatrice, stressing the importance of love for neighbor in the spiritual process of knowing God follows the Cistercian tradition. However, like

Hadewych, she also considers reason of utmost importance in spiritual life. In doing so, she certainly differs from the great Cistercian mystic, St. Bernard of Clairvaux. St. Bernard, who did not deny that the contemplation of God was a contemplation rooted in reason, attacked Abelard for having too great expectations of reason where spiritual life was concerned. He found Abelard to be presumptuous in this matter.³⁰ Bernard thought detachment from all interest in corporeal life was the right way to achieve contemplation of God.³¹ According to Bernard, going into sudden raptures might be the awkward to this way. The strong, even exaggerated asceticism present in Beatrice's life was certainly part of the Cistercian tradition.

However, her spiritual life shows a much greater attachment to reason and its faculties than was Cistercian custom.

NOTES

1. Tienen is a town in Belgium.
2. The convent was in Lier.
3. However, this is very doubtful, since Willem already was a very skilled author about 1268 and certainly not a *tyro* in writing, as the author of the biography of Beatrijs calls himself. Willem of Afflighem wrote the biography of St. Lutgardis, (*Vita Lutgardis* by Willem of Afflighem, F. van Veereghem, ed., 1900), which proves the great literary qualities of the author before 1268. This makes it rather doubtful that he should have also been the author of the *Life of Beatrijs of Nazareth*. See *L'hagiographie cistercienne dans le diocèse de Liège au 13^e siècle* by S. Roisin. Leuven, 1947, p. 301, *sq.*
4. Beghinae were educated women in the 13th century. Some of them even set out to preach, which was soon forbidden by the Pope (*A.A.S.S.Oct.* 13, III, A). See also my chapter on Hadewych.
5. 'Per idem quoque tempus a patre magistris liberalium artium est commissa disciplinis scholaribus quibus iam a matre initiata expeditius informanda' (*Vita* I, III, 21).
6. It is highly probable, that there was a so-called schola Latina in Zoutleeuw, although there is no other evidence for its existence than the evidence found in *Vita Beatricis* (See L. Reypens in *Vita Beatricis*, Antwerpen 1964). At least the dative "Magistris" in *Vita* I, III, 21 (see note 5) suggests that Beatrice was committed to the charge of "Magistri" or "magistrae", who should take care of her education in the liberal arts. Magistri would be evidence for a latin school and magistrae would refer to the erudition of the women, in whose charge Beatrice was given.

7. Beatrice was anxious to die from fear of sin (*Vita* 169). This fear made her long for death.
8. This experience made Beatrice weak. She lost control over her body and seemed to be unconscious to the other nuns (*Vita* 163). She had to be put to bed. The biographer gives his own reasons for the corporeal phenomena: the soul, which is powerful everywhere in the body, immediately transmitted the feeling of this union to all the members of the body. The concept that the soul moves the body and is powerful in every part of it is found in Augustine's writings, for instance in his *De quantitate animae*, ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges, 1980.
9. This vision is described in *Vita* 215: Beatrix sees God, the Father sending a river out from Himself. This river is the Son. Many small rivers are going out from the Son, inviting people of good will to come and drink from the waters that are streaming into eternal life.
10. The concept that the human soul made in the image of God is between God and the world is found in Gregory of Nyssa, in *De officio hominis* (Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 44).
11. "Let us make a pact, let us make an alliance, that we may not be separated from each other, but that we may truly be unified together."
12. See *Statuta capitulorum generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis ab anno 1116 ad annum 1786*, edited by D.J.M. Canivez, 8 volumes, Leuven (Louvain, 1932–1941); *L'Ordre de Cîteaux en Belgique* by D.J.M. Canivez, Forges lez Chimay, Abbaye Cistercienne de Notre Dame de Scourmont, 1926. Many convents came to existence since the 12th century. These convents are all characterized by the influence of mysticism.
13. (M.S. Brussels 4459–4470), *Vita* III, 7, n. 213–217; *Vita* II, 11, n. 125; *Vita* III, 2, n. 195.
14. See L. Reypens in his Introduction of the *Vita Beatricis*, p. 68, note 4.
15. Beatrice used to walk barefoot at night in the snow, etc.
16. Trembling of the limbs and uncontrolled laughter seem sometimes to have been additional signs of the mental state of Beatrijs' mystical enjoyment of God (ch. XI).
17. *Codex Vindobonensis* S.N. 12707; *Codex Gandavensis* 165; *Codices Bruxellenses* 4459–70; Dutch edition of the *Vita* by L. Reypens, Antwerp 1964. Dutch edition of the *Seven Modes* by J. van Mierlo, Leuven (Louvain), 1926.
18. The entire work concerns the strain of cyclic Love. This topic strongly reminds us of Dionysius Areopagite in *De divinis nominibus* IV, 11, 17 and IV, 14, 8. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, III, 607sq. According to Dionysius yearning for God is a movement in our soul; God, the object of our yearning, causes this movement in the soul. Beatrice introduces the *Seven Modes*: "There are seven modes of love, coming from the highest and returning to the highest."
19. *Seven Manieren van Minne*, edited by L. Reypens and J. Van Mierlo, Leuven (Louvain, Belgium) 1926.
20. Cf. St. Paul, *Phil.* I, 23.
21. This expression reminds us of St. Augustine, who uses it under Neoplatonic influence.

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22. Juan de la Cruz, *Llama de Amor Viva*, strophe I, vers 6.
23. See L. Reypens, *Vita Beatricis* Antwerpen, 1964.
24. Reypens (in *Vita Beatricis*, Antwerpen 1964, p. 58) thinks the *Seven Manieren* to be the only writing of Beatrijs. He does not consider the other titles of subjects mentioned in the *Vita* to be the titles of treatises, but merely the titles of schedules for school-lessons.
25. Van Mierlo (op. cit. p. 76) thinks that the contents of *Vita* II, 3, told by the biographer, are based on an original treatise of Beatrijs. Personally I think Van Mierlo is right, as he is with regard to the other treatises. See preceding note.
26. *Passio* in mediaeval Latin means: 1) the enduring of . . . , the undergoing of . . . ; the experiencing of . . . , 2) suffering, pain, illness, discomfort, 3) Passion (of Christ), 4) affection, emotion, passion.
27. The allegory of the orchard goes back to the Legend of Felicitas and Perpetua and found its way through the Middle Ages. See for instance the writings of Sister Berthe, a fourteenth century nun and recluse in the City of Utrecht.
28. Providentia = Precaution or providential caution.
29. Summum Bonum is said of God by St. Augustine under Neoplatonic influence.
30. *De erroribus Abälardi* ch. I (Bernardi opera ed. Migne, Lut. Par. 1854, vol I–IV, *Patrologia Latina* 182–185): “. . . for what is more against reason than to try to transcend reason by reason?”
31. *De Consideratione*, ch. V.

6. Mechtild of Magdeburg

JOAN GIBSON

I. BACKGROUND

In the thirteenth century the Saxon abbey of Helfta was preeminent for the learning and piety of its inhabitants.¹ It boasted four great lights of religion and reform, whose fame and influence were wide spread: Gertrude and Mechtild of Hackeborn, Mechtild of Magdeburg and Gertrude of Helfta (Gertrude the Great) represent a considerable range of learning and devotion. The forty year rule of abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn (1251–1291) in particular was marked by zeal for the education of the nuns.² In the latter part of her abbacy, there arose at Helfta the extraordinary flowering of mysticism for which it became so justly famed.

The abbey was founded in 1229 by the Count of Mansfield and his wife, and was moved twice before 1258 when it located at Helfta on land given by the brothers of abbess Gertrude.³ Helfta became a large and relatively prosperous community; during the thirteenth century it numbered over a hundred women.⁴ Most likely, candidates for the monastery were drawn primarily from influential families of neighboring Thuringia and Saxony. Helfta continued to receive protection from the counts of Mansfield and the noble family of Hackeborn, but these connections did not spare them from the turbulence of the period, which in 1343 drove the com-

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munity from the site. During Gertrude's rule the abbey was twice pillaged, and the nuns suffered poverty and debt.⁵ The inhabitants endured spiritual hardships as well when they were placed under interdict in 1295.⁶

Although probably formally under the Benedictine rule, Helfta was also influenced by Cistercian spirituality.⁷ There is considerable evidence of both intellectual and spiritual activity in the community. The nuns made substantial contributions to the development of eucharistic piety and were an important inspiration for the new cult of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.⁸ The book collections made by the abbess Gertrude were substantial, and the nuns themselves, instructed in the liberal arts, were also active as scribes and miniaturists.⁹ The nuns were widely consulted, esteemed by the laity and clergy alike.¹⁰

According to Caroline Walker Bynum's major study on the Helfta mystics, their spirituality can be understood as a specifically female form of piety.¹¹ She suggests that the environment was particularly fertile in promoting their self-confidence, as well as in fostering the nun's intense mystical interests.¹² She believes that the writing of two members of Helfta, Mechtild of Hackeborn and Gertrude the Great, "were a conscious effort to establish and hand on to a next generation of sisters and to readers outside the cloister a spiritual teaching and a collective reputation."¹³ She characterizes three of these writings as revealing a collective authorship.¹⁴ While these may indicate a communal sense of identity, they are also heavily influenced by a woman whose spiritual formation was in the world, rather than at Helfta.

II. BIOGRAPHY

The beguine Mechtild of Magdeburg, who came to the convent only in the last decades of her life, is the author of the earliest writing associated with Helfta. She tells us something of her life as a beguine, but much information on her early life is lacking.¹⁵ She is thought to have been born 1207 or a few years after; her writings suggest that her family was associated with wealth, perhaps at the secular courts.¹⁶ By her account, she first received God's greeting at the age of twelve, and it continued daily thereafter. By her early

twenties she had moved to Magdeburg to pursue a religious life away from anyone she knew; her forty years there perhaps were spent as a beguine.¹⁷ Considerable hostility followed her outspoken censure of religious decay, and her critics wanted her books burned.¹⁸ As advised by her spiritual director, she retired to Helfta c. 1270, where she spent her remaining days, dying there c. 1282.¹⁹ Although regarded as a saint by her contemporaries, she was never canonized.²⁰ Earlier attempts to identify her with the Matelda of Dante's *Paradiso* are now discredited, as is the view that her relatively individualized spirituality foreshadowed protestant reform.²¹

III. WORKS

Beginning perhaps after a period of spiritual aridity in her middle years, Mechtild wrote accounts of the divine visitations she had experienced.²² The descriptions were composed in middle low German, Mechtild being the first mystic to write in that vernacular.²³ The loose sheets were collected and rearranged into a work in six books (sections) known as *Das fliessende Lichte der Gottheit* (*The Flowing Light of the Godhead*) which was circulated during her lifetime. They were reordered by an unidentified Henry, thought to be her spiritual advisor, and generally believed to be the Dominican, Henry of Halle, a theologian and student of Albert the Great.²⁴ The seventh section was dictated by the ailing, nearly blind Mechtild after her removal to Helfta. Latin translations of the original six books, made around the time of her death, are extant in manuscripts of the mid fourteenth century.²⁵ The complete work survives in a fourteenth century middle high German translation by the secular priest Henry of Nördlingen, who was an important link in its popularization and preservation in mystical circles.²⁶ This version probably reflects more closely the original order and character of Mechtild's writings.²⁷

The roles of compiler and early translator are controversial. Mechtild felt a deep devotion to her scribe and regarded him as an important help in her labours, but his reorganizations may have been so extensive as to remove the possibility of recapturing any detailed sense of Mechtild's personal and thematic developments.²⁸ It remains unclear how he may have influenced her intellectual

development or affected her spirituality; it is certain that the Latin translation added scholastic terminology and, in the interest of decorum, altered her blunt and daring language.²⁹

The Flowing Light is a rich and varied work; it includes “mystical visions, letters, parables, reflections, allegories, prayers, criticism and advice,” conveyed with a stylistic diversity that mingles prose and poetry, monologue and dialogue.³⁰ Among the prominent speakers are God and the soul, Love and the senses. The forceful, direct quality of Mechtild’s language was remarked on early by Henry of Nördlingen who said “this book, in delightful and vigorous German, is the most moving love poem I have ever read in our tongue.”³¹ Mechtild’s poetry is generally conceded to be of a very high quality.³² Her imagery is striking, fresh and often remarkably gentle. Conception and birth are like sun shining in water; God comes as the dew on flowers; God tells her that at her death he will draw his breath and she will go to him “as a needle to a magnet”.³³ Her blending of secular and religious language is both pervasive and original. Erotic and nuptial imagery, freely and boldly deployed, dominates, but domestic imagery also finds a place. Mechtild develops three especially vivid metaphors – the secular court, the mystical dance and ecstatic inebriation, reflecting courtly, mystical and biblical models.³⁴ Mechtild’s revelations, especially those concerning union, are strongly characterized by imagery of light and heat, derived ultimately from pseudo-Dionysian themes, but even her more detailed visual accounts lack the extraordinary precision found in Hildegard of Bingen.³⁵ Her imagery of speech and motion is sometimes more concrete. An important aspect of her thought is revealed by her imagery of liquids, which provides useful insights into her philosophical understanding of the universe.³⁶ Her visions of heaven, hell and purgatory are early examples of a non-classical view of the after-life and the purgatory visions in particular are significant in the history of that doctrine.³⁷

Although Mechtild declares that she was uneducated, she may have overstressed her own ignorance. Her claims probably refer to her lack of facility in Latin, and to the absence of theological training.³⁸ Bynum notes how skillfully she exploits the standard humility *topos* to contrast herself with the more learned, especially clerics, who despite their responsible roles still do not follow God’s will or receive his revelations.³⁹ Mechtild stresses that God exalts

his power, reveals his affinity for the lowly and shows the greatness of his love by manifesting his glory through such a humble servant. In one vision, God assures her that it is for her very lowliness that he chose her, while in another, when she is discouraged by attacks upon her for daring to write, she questions why God has chosen her rather than someone learned.⁴⁰ He becomes angry with her and her confessor consoles her by assuring her that writing is indeed her vocation.⁴¹ Mechtild repeatedly emphasises the difficulties attendant on sterile learning in the absence of genuine love. Her relatively frequent imagery of the schoolroom generally points to the harmful effects of education; devils or the foolishly wise are the scholarly protagonists.⁴² While she insists that worldly wisdom alone breeds pride and hinders virtue, making the scholar too timid to love fully, Mechtild nevertheless takes upon herself the role of teacher, since she teaches the love of God necessary for a correct understanding of him.⁴³ God tells her that it is his truth which she writes, and compares the parchment to Christ's humanity, the words to the Father's divinity, and the sound of the words to the Holy Spirit in the living truth.⁴⁴

Among the reactions Mechtild encounters is the view that her writing is inappropriately masculine.⁴⁵ Her denunciations and struggles, as well as her assumption of the teaching role, are often couched in explicitly masculine imagery, reflecting masculine roles. Her reply to critics seems to indicate that it is the substance of her work which provoked the reaction. Mechtild sees it as an indication of the sad state of religious life that it is she, a woman, who must undertake these roles, but that through her God shows even more clearly what he can accomplish.⁴⁶ But she always insists that she is God's mouthpiece, and thus criticisms of her writings are inappropriate.⁴⁷

IV. INFLUENCES

Mechtild of Magdeburg was certainly much affected by contemporary love lyrics – in both the courtly and more popular forms – and by the popular science of her youth, as well as by the Scriptural passages, the liturgy, and religious legends of her maturity; all contribute to the distinctive features of her style.⁴⁸ On the intellec-

tual side, Mechtild was familiar to some degree with the mystical writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, and the Victorines. She was probably also familiar with the writings of William of Saint-Thierry, David of Augsburg, Hildegard of Bingen, and Gregory the Great, as well as the contemporary milleniarist visionary, Joachim of Fiore.⁴⁹ Themes of heavenly hierarchy, emanation and return – derived ultimately from the christianized neoplatonism of pseudo-Dionysius – seem to be important as well. It is possible that Mechtild was influenced by Dutch women mystics, including Beatrice of Nazareth and Hadewych of Antwerp.⁵⁰ Ancelet-Hustache notes the difficulty of identifying her sources, since many of the ideas incorporated were common coin, and the wording seldom follows any given source precisely.⁵¹

The influence of Dominican authors on her work is decisive and was recognized early. Mechtild's close ties to the Dominicans of Magdeburg and to Dominican theology were of prime importance.⁵² She probably knew of contemporary writings by Aquinas (1224/25–1274) but by far the single most profound influence on her work is her German Dominican contemporary, Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280).⁵³ Neoplatonic, augustinian and dyonisian elements, especially those found in Albert's doctrine of the soul, find echos in her own thought. These elements were in wide circulation in the North, owing to Albert's enormous prestige and popularity, and there were many possible routes of transmission, Henry of Halle being the most probable.⁵⁴

Mechtild's powerful presence has led scholars to call her "the most original personality in the history of German mysticism in the thirteenth century" and "une des figures les plus séduisantes du moyen âge," and to describe her writings as "quite simply interesting to read."⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, she provided inspiration for others at least from the time of her entry to Helfta. So greatly was she loved and revered there that she "influenced the way in which the religious life of the convent developed in the 1280s and 1290s when the compilers of the other volumes of visions were at work."⁵⁶ In spite of the significant differences between them, her impact was magnified by their writings. In the succeeding generations of mystics, her works were well known, and her popularity was considerable. Mechtild exerted a direct influence in the fourteenth century through the mediation of Henry of Nördlingen who was closely

connected with The Friends of God, an important mystical group in Basel with links to other northern mystics. Through his efforts, *The Flowing Light* became known to Margareta Ebner, Christina Ebner, Margareta of the Golden Ring and John Tauler, and may have been known by Henry Suso.⁵⁷

The Flowing Light was read at least through the early sixteenth century, although by then its early popularity had waned.⁵⁸ It has attracted steady attention since its rediscovery in 1861, and its publication in 1869. Recently scholarship has intensified, and the work is now being studied for its mystical value, its literary and philological value, and for its place in the German intellectual tradition.⁵⁹ Important questions remain about how it may have contributed to the development of mystical piety in the Rhineland and the Low Countries, as well as its perceived similarities to contemporary heretical doctrines.⁶⁰

One of the more vexed questions concerns possible connections with the German speculative mystics, especially Meister Eckhart (1260–1327), who develops several themes found in Mechtild's writings, notably the longing of God for the soul, his playfulness with the soul, the ground of the soul, the presence of God in all, and the love death of the soul. It seems very likely that Eckhart and others were in some way influenced by the women mystics of the thirteenth century, although the exact nature and channel of influence remains incompletely understood.⁶¹ The most widely held explanation connects the origin of German mysticism with two developments affecting German Dominicans in the second half of the thirteenth century. The friars assumed closer spiritual care for convents of Dominican nuns, and later they undertook a reform of the convents. Both events brought more intense contact between the friars and the nuns; the growth of mysticism is then said to result from the influence of scholastically trained Dominican preachers on the less educated nuns and beguines for whom they provided spiritual direction. In particular, earlier views stress the need to translate scholastic philosophical thought and vocabulary into the vernacular, treating philosophical and theological ideas in a simplified, more devotional manner.⁶² But this view is being modified by recent scholars, who see a more active role for the women. It is now clear that the women influenced and inspired their directors intellectually and spiritually as well as practically and

pastorally and that in addition, special features of beguine spirituality may have contributed substantially to male mystical movements.⁶³ Mechtild stands at the forefront of this double movement, between religious women and scholastics, at a time when her innovations and influence could be most powerful.

V. METAPHYSICS AND COSMOLOGY

The first extended appraisal of the philosophical basis of Mechtild's thought is James C. Franklin's study of Mechtild's imagery, which he sees as based on a cosmological theory of the four elements – earth, air, fire and water. According to Franklin, the elements are arranged on the great chain uniting the human and the divine.⁶⁴ The tension between elements “simultaneously gradualistic and antithetical” is overcome by transformation between the elements.⁶⁵ Human existence in body and soul is viewed as a microcosm of this whole and is closely assimilated to the view of humans as created in the image and likeness of God.⁶⁶

In order to show the essential harmony and integration of the universe, and the union of the soul with God, Mechtild is said to re-orient elemental theory. By turning it away from a grounding in ideas of relative densities and instead toward concepts of relative natural motion, she makes motion the sign of being, life and spirit.⁶⁷ As the elements move toward their natural spheres, they are transformed “from heaviness, immobility, and not-being to lightness, motion and being or eternal life.”⁶⁸ In this schema, water signifies transition, the movement of the soul toward God “achieved actually by divine love flowing between heaven and earth and metaphorically by water flowing between the ethereal and terrestrial spheres.”⁶⁹ Both God and the soul move toward union through a series of such transitions.⁷⁰

1. *Creation*

Franklin helps to outline one version of the dionysian emanation and return in cosmological terms. Mechtild joins to it an augustinian theme of the soul's love as its weight, drawing it to its natural

resting place in God.⁷¹ Recent studies have rightly emphasised the importance Mechtild attaches to motion both within the Trinity and in union as a sign of unitive love and joy, and thus an important attribute of both the soul and God.⁷² Her approach here differs from much of Greek and scholastic thought, in which motion is regarded negatively and stability valued.⁷³ However, Mechtild is quite consistent with another aspect of contemporary thought which places the perfection of the soul and God in some form of act.

Significantly, she also alters somewhat the weighting of emanation and return to the divine. Mechtild is less interested in cosmology, creation and causality than in restoration, and accordingly, the moral dimension takes precedence over metaphysics. Free will and human nature as image of the Incarnation are central; the remedy for distance and alienation from God is found in love as well as in nature and knowledge. Even more directly than in dionysian theories of celestial hierarchy and divine illumination, Mechtild's views are based on God's revelation of himself as love.⁷⁴ Just as the internal relations of the Trinity are through love, so in the present world all creatures announce divine love, and in her visions, the ultimate structures of creation – heaven, purgatory and hell – reflect it.⁷⁵ Heaven is described essentially in terms of love, with knowledge and power as attendant attributes, while the very name of hell is "eternal hatred".⁷⁶ Such a universe is less orderly and more anthropocentric than the classic, more essentialist or intellectualist views of emanation. Mechtild sees humans exalted above the angels; loving maidens, together with the virgin Mary, John the Baptist and the apostles take their place above or with the seraphim, while holy preachers and martyrs join the lower choir of the cherubim.⁷⁷ In spite of their spiritual nature and superior intellects, the angels are a less glorious reflection of the divine nature as they lack both the humanity of Christ, and the attendant love and suffering which he shares with human creation.⁷⁸

2. Relation of Creation to God

In her book, written as she tells us, "out of God's heart and mouth," love is everywhere the key.⁷⁹ Love (*minne*) pervades the book, appearing variously as Lady Love, the personified abstrac-

tion which compels all lovers – even divine lovers – and as the non-personified desire of the lovers, as a substance and a nature. The universe, just as is her book, is begun and ended in love.⁸⁰ Mechtild eschews the scriptural description of God as “I am who am” (Exodus, 3, 15) in favour of “God is Love” (I, John 4, 8) and as the “All in all” (1 Cor. 15, 28).⁸¹ God is everywhere present in creation, recognizable to the loving soul. God creates souls out of eternal love for both his own preexistent humanity and for the individual soul.⁸² God’s yearning for the soul is boundless; love even compels the divine to serve the human soul.⁸³ As dramatic as this sounds, it reflects a courtly convention which does not here violate the order of divine and human, since it is the very nature of God to love and thus he obeys only himself.⁸⁴ Creation in the image of God is creation into love as a nature. One of the more controversial points in Mechtild’s work is her emphasis on this natural commonality between the human and divine.⁸⁵ Only because the nature of the creature is also love is it capable of union.⁸⁶

3. *The Image of God*

For Mechtild, the human image has a trinitarian foundation, though not the augustinian triad of memory, intellect and will, so much as the human reflection of God’s power, wisdom and goodness.⁸⁷ Most often she relates the human image to the Incarnation, body and soul reflecting the triune God’s love of humanity and union with the human in the Incarnation.⁸⁸ Christ’s embodied humanity is a “comprehensible picture” of the Godhead, and Mechtild even invokes the trinity in bodily terms as her heart, body and breath.⁸⁹ In another passage, the threefold image in the soul consists in manly striving, maidenly beauty and bridal pleasure.⁹⁰ Ultimate union consists of the threefold vision of God rejoicing the twofold human heart.⁹¹

Since Christ takes on sinless human nature from eternity, that nature is preserved sinlessly in God. The fall of Adam, while affecting subsequent human nature, does not damage it intrinsically, making possible the soul’s return to God whom it resembles.⁹² Mechtild seeks the origin of the fall in the perverted will of the fallen angels, more than in human nature. Although the sinner is

culpable, the temptations of the devil exploit human weaknesses in actually causing sin.⁹³ Her discussions of sin focus more on dispositions than the acts which follow from them. Mechtild displays some ambivalence over the eternity of hell, at least with respect to human sinners and optimism that more are saved than damned.⁹⁴

The nature of the angels is single, and therefore capable of only one choice.⁹⁵ Human nature, however, has a twofold aspect: sinful and sinless, body and soul, temporal and eternal; it can exercise choice at many levels, and alter choices over time.⁹⁶ Correct choice leads the soul to reunion with its sinless manifestation in God. Poor choice, more often through folly than malice, leads away from God. With wise choice as her foundationstone, Mechtild emphasises the relation of the human soul to God both through its nature as image of God's creative love, and through grace by God's redemptive love and restoration of the image.⁹⁷ The wisdom of choice lies in selecting the proper object of love; the human person can then contribute to the perfection of nature by both works and virtues which increase intimacy with the object of love.⁹⁸

While Mechtild's view of love as nature and the highest human capacity has pauline and augustinian precedent, she gives it a new accent and interpretation. Her description of the loving relation to God owes much to the medieval courtly requirements of longing, of sacrifice and battle for love, of fidelity, humility, trust, patience, pleasing the beloved – of all forms of service to the beloved and to others for the sake of the beloved.⁹⁹ In this service, Mechtild's God renounces the justice of punishment and the soul accepts suffering.¹⁰⁰ In spite of its immense importance in helping the soul attain to God, suffering does not belong to the soul's natural condition, but remains an instrument of the earthly soul, originating from the devil.¹⁰¹ The role of suffering is two-fold: imitation of Christ and discipline. In the first, it belongs to the image to identify with Christ's poverty and pain, undertaken by him for love of mankind in obedience to the will of the Father. In the other, self-centred desires are overcome and expiated, leaving the soul free to love another.¹⁰²

Mechtild frequently uses the image of the soul as a receptacle of divine love which must be emptied of the impediment of self will in order receive God's love and conform to his image.¹⁰³ This relates closely to her use of metaphors of transparency, which suggest that

the image is not only a reflection, but that the divine nature itself shines through its container.¹⁰⁴ Although her most frequent metaphors of the divine image are drawn from the idea of reflection, Mechtild also uses metaphors of transparent vessels and of the seal to help show her view of spiritual union.

4. *Union*

For Mechtild, union is to the Trinity, or the godhead, and is made possible by God's eternal assumption of human nature.¹⁰⁵ The soul responds first by its bodily and spiritual love of Christ's human body and soul, and is led in turn to its own union of human and divine in God. Uniting love begins at the level of the senses, where it is led by joy, then in the understanding, and finally in suffering freely chosen for the sake of love.¹⁰⁶ Union is grounded in the total conformity of the soul's will with God's beginning in a fragmentary way in this life and confirmed forever in the next.¹⁰⁷ But though the human will follows God's loves and hates, union is more appropriately seen as the recreation of both wills in the attainment of all that they mutually desire.¹⁰⁸

Mechtild sees the soul becoming "god with God", but in this divinization, individuality remains and human nature, though transformed, is not lost.¹⁰⁹ Divine union is the mutual penetration of two separate persons, not annihilation or absorption in the divine.¹¹⁰ For Mechtild, union is intensely personal; although she indicates its resemblance to courtly and familial relationships, she focuses especially on the fully adult, erotic relationship between Christ and the soul.¹¹¹ The chief obstacle to union is not ignorance of the beloved or of the means to union, but a lukewarm disposition.¹¹² The soul actively seeks union, though the initial movement comes from God.¹¹³ In one passage she speaks of the blessed who sing, laugh and leap, dance, flow, swim, fly and climb to the understanding of their own human nature, writ in body and soul, and reflecting the Trinity.¹¹⁴ Union itself is also active; though it encompasses forms of knowledge and contemplation, its ultimate goal is best described as an experience of divine love.¹¹⁵

VI. ANTHROPOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

1. *Senses and Knowledge*

It is within the framework of a universe composed and ordered by love, and with joyful, active union as the natural and mutual goal of human and divine that Mechtild's earthly anthropology can be elaborated. Although the physical world may constitute a distraction and temptation, it is not scorned. Perhaps under courtly influences, she sometimes glories in positive and vivid images of the bodily and physical.¹¹⁶ Alongside these passages, however, Mechtild in common with most medievals often uses extreme language to speak of the world as dust or the body as an enemy, a prison for the soul, to some extent a hindrance to virtue and union.¹¹⁷ She generally adopts a practical view of the body's requirements, while indicating that corruption lies in sin, not matter itself.¹¹⁸ In striving to overcome self-will, whether manifested in the flesh or the soul, the body can be a positive instrument for salvation, for it is through the body that virtues are practiced, good works are performed and merit acquired.¹¹⁹

Here, Mechtild's originality lies in her comparatively high evaluation of the role of the senses in cognition and union. While acknowledging that her own mystical visionary experiences may differ from ordinary perception, Mechtild more frequently refers to the ways ordinary sensation contributes to knowledge of God.¹²⁰ She is not interested in an analysis of sensation but in the relation of sensory and intellectual knowledge. She blends the two to a remarkable degree; sensation is never treated apart from the role it plays in ordered knowledge.

Knowledge is ordered insofar as it leads toward an end – it is sought and experienced in relation to that end. Ascetic practice and suffering play a role in purifying the senses, preparing them to distinguish correctly what they experience. In addition to this process of educating the senses, Mechtild frequently mentions that the experience of God enlightens the senses by which she seems to mean that grace enables them to evaluate experience and order knowledge.¹²¹ With experience, the senses discriminate among their objects, and develop preferences on the basis of relation to the end. In this active cognition, the senses are intentional and Mechtild

exploits the full range of her term *Sinn(e)*, which can indicate the sense faculties themselves and perception, or point toward ideas of consciousness, meaning, understanding or reason. She also employs the idea of the spiritual senses, an awareness of God understood in a way analogous to experience provided by the physical senses.¹²² In both, elements of desire and reinforcing sensual pleasure are prominent, but the spiritualized senses seem to provide a higher perspective which extends the evaluative role of the physical senses.¹²³ Any knowledge gained and treasured for its own sake or for the enhancement of self is merely human – “fleshly” in the pauline sense. Conversely, all knowledge can lead toward God when the “heart sits lightly to all things.”¹²⁴ Mechtild’s view of knowledge is thus very practical, so much so that in this life even contemplation is understanding that virtues must be put into practice in works.¹²⁵

The relevant distinction for Mechtild is thus not between practical and theoretical or material and immaterial knowledge, but between knowledge of the human and the divine. Both have a sensory and intellectual component. Although the passive, material body and the active immaterial soul are different by nature and in the present life reach different forms of fulfillment, they are intimately united in the senses which are material but also active and intentional.¹²⁶

All naturally acquired human knowledge whatever, including the fruits of ordinary reasoning and whatever is learned by instruction or reading, is gained by the senses, and belongs to the sensory world.¹²⁷ Mechtild seems suspicious of abstract argument as tending to wander away from the necessary corrective of suffering in the senses and as being especially liable to cause error through pride.¹²⁸ The overwhelming importance of the Incarnation underlies Mechtild’s doctrine of sense knowledge leading toward the divine. She sees those who would bypass Christ’s human nature and physicality to seek unmediated union with the Godhead as aspiring to a false and proud holiness. Mechtild rejoices with body, soul and senses that she has been spared this temptation, and that the Holy Spirit enlightens the heart and teaches the human senses.¹²⁹ Christ’s humanity begins human knowledge of God, since it presents a comprehensible picture of the incomprehensible Godhead and is the basis of a special bond of love between God and humans.¹³⁰ Conversely, she taunts the devil with his inability to create a physical

body.¹³¹ In the correct sequence, the senses and bodily existence initiate knowledge of the divine through grounding knowledge of God-become-man. God first addresses the soul through the senses, and both love and choice begin in the senses and grow in the soul.¹³²

Although the soul leads the senses, which serve it, each shows an awareness of what the other provides.¹³³ This relationship is spelled out in three important dialogues, between the personified soul and the senses, the soul and understanding, and conscience and understanding. In the first, the senses urge the soul toward all the steps of perfection, but the soul flies ahead, and they are unable to follow her into union; the soul comforts them, saying that they are still needed to guide her when she returns.¹³⁴ In the second dialogue, understanding is seen as wiser than the humble soul, but as unable to keep pace with the soul's journey through love. She can recognize the soul as an image of God, but cannot penetrate to the mystery of their union.¹³⁵ In the third, understanding again stresses her knowledge that the soul is an image of God but remains puzzled why the soul's nature in itself is insufficient for union. Guided by the superior perspective of the conscience, it realizes that an active image is required, concluding "Perseverance in good works is love in action."¹³⁶ Two short poems reiterate the theme that the fruitful joining of knowledge and love begins in the wisdom of the senses.¹³⁷

2. The Progression of Knowledge

Several poems speak of a progression of knowledge in which sensory wisdom again marks a middle stage. In one, unaided thought wanders in a false heaven made by the devil, while the "holy longing of the senses," joined to "the first part of love" begins the ascent but is still vulnerable to deception. In the third stage, it goes beyond the senses to the light of true love in which it sees both itself and God.¹³⁸ Another progression begins with institutional initiation into wisdom through baptism and instruction, then the wisdom of the natural senses, guarded and nurtured by simplicity, leads toward true knowledge of God; but grace alone brings final wisdom with the fullness of virtue.¹³⁹ The senses thus seem to provide a very important transition from attachment to the world to union with God. Their role is crucial and almost becomes synonymous with

choice, since it is their attractions and loves that set the pattern for the soul.¹⁴⁰ They are subject to error partly through conflicting attractions, and partly through the deceptions of the devil.¹⁴¹ Although they are weak and open indifferently to created and divine objects, it is within their power to recognize the proper object of love, and help the person recognize herself as a reflection.¹⁴²

3. *Discernment and Recognition*

The theme of discernment and recognition is an important one for Mechtild.¹⁴³ Her visionary encounters with the deceits of the devil take the form of debate/riddles resolved by recognition, not by struggle or by syllogisms.¹⁴⁴ Such recognition is grounded in self knowledge – knowing oneself as a beloved, fleshly, image of God, already united to him through Christ.¹⁴⁵ This knowledge is based on experience in the world including the revelation of divine love.¹⁴⁶ Present knowledge, in itself morally neutral, must properly be informed by the life of the senses, especially through suffering and works.¹⁴⁷ Mechtild characterizes present wisdom as useful knowledge, which the enlightened senses can recognize as participating in God's endless wisdom.¹⁴⁸ The Holy Spirit, the giver of gifts, personifies that divine wisdom and truth at least as frequently as does the Son as *Logos*. Mechtild emphasises the role of Holy Spirit as bringing both nature and grace, reinforcing the role of grace in knowledge.¹⁴⁹

4. *The Interdependence of the Forms of Knowledge*

Mechtild thus unfolds a doctrine of radical interdependence of physical, intellectual and spiritual knowledge, refusing to divorce intellectual from experiential knowledge, the known from the knower. The senses are cognitive elements of great power, reaching even toward God. They stand for the condition of embodied life, which even in the present has both a fleshly and a spiritualized form. When embodiment continues into blessedness, the senses partake in the divinization of the soul.¹⁵⁰ According to Mechtild the only truly significant form of knowledge occurs in union, in the

experience of God which alone brings understanding; just as the body plays a preparatory role in the fleeting moments of union on earth, so it shares in eternal union.¹⁵¹ Understanding of the divine is not a matter of abstract intellection; when the soul transcends the senses, it also transcends its intellectual cognition, and what is experienced then is ineffable.¹⁵² The very limited role Mechtild accords to abstract knowledge is in line with her view of the proper object of human knowledge, for she seeks to know first the God who lived and suffered for love. For Mechtild, knowledge of the reasoned fact involves knowledge of the trinitarian structure of love, and of psychology of human will and love, more than an analysis through causality. The highest intellectual state is wonder, rather than comprehension, the highest contemplation in this life is the practice of the virtues.¹⁵³

VII. ETHICS

Mechtild's ethics grows out of her emphasis on the experience of love. Because it is an image, the soul is naturally attracted to its proper object unless it is blinded by self-will or deceived by the devil. Mechtild presents debates with devils in the form of recognition riddles but no psychomachia, and only a very limited taxonomy of the virtues. Standing in the tradition of Christian liberty, she does not seem pre-occupied with the limits of permissible actions or analysis of duties, and offers no guidance on conflicting duties. She connects the virtues insofar as they all relate to love, believing that small faults lead to grave sins; obedience is the cornerstone of virtue, and self-will the worst vice.¹⁵⁴ Her primary concern is with the private virtues which enhance the openness of the individual soul to God. These resemble the monastic virtues in that they are directed to God more than to neighbors, in the importance of obedience, and in the emphasis on love as a pre-requisite for spiritual development. Chastity occupies a central role, as in monastic writers, but it seems less problematic and is set consistently in the context of an erotic relationship with God.¹⁵⁵

Although Mechtild is somewhat concerned with life in the secular world, she does not analyse how social and political life should be governed, regarding power as an obstacle to moral life.¹⁵⁶ This may

account for her lack of interest in arranging virtues by their relation to prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. More often she relates social virtues to loving service, interpreted according to feudal and courtly ideals.¹⁵⁷ Social relations are thus properly governed by virtues designed for living out daily life in close proximity to others, especially in a way conducive to aiding their relation with God: compassion, cheerfulness, discretion, gentleness, patience, service to the afflicted and, humility toward others are particularly important.¹⁵⁸ Such qualities lead directly to the works she discusses. These encompass the monastic works of fasting and discipline, but they reflect also her beguine experience as she stresses works with some worldly involvement and effort for others, especially the relief of poverty and the alleviation of psychological suffering.¹⁵⁹ However, the most frequently mentioned recipients of good works are the souls in purgatory. Both virtues and works accompany and adorn the soul in heaven, but in union with God the soul rises above both, as above knowledge.¹⁶⁰ Both are ultimately in the service of love.¹⁶¹

VIII. SUMMARY

Mechtild presents above all a metaphysics, an epistemology and an ethical psychology of love. Her emphasis on the union of human and divine, on the role of experience in knowledge, on concern for others, are all subordinated to a perception of love as the ruling principle of God and creation. Lacking an essentialist or causal analysis, except in terms of love, bearing little relation to scholastic forms of reasoning, her work nevertheless announces themes that have been fruitful in later medieval mysticism, both speculative and affective, and for attempts to integrate experience and commitment with philosophical reflection.

NOTES

1. The bibliography for the monastery and its inhabitants is large, though comparatively little has been written in English until quite recently. For the most accessible summary in English, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns at Helfta," in *Jesus*

as *Mother*, pp. 173–86; Lina Eckenstein, *Woman under Monasticism*, pp. 328–53 remains valuable as an introduction. See Peter Dinzelbacker, “Europäische Frauenmystik des mittelalters. Ein Überblick”, pp. 21–22, for very useful recent bibliographic information on materials for the study of the women mystics. Note especially Gertrude Jaron Lewis, *Bibliographie zur deutschen mittelalterlicher Frauenmystik* (Berlin: forthcoming, 1989).

2. Eckenstein, p. 329.
3. Bynum, p. 175. Gertrude of Hackeborn lived c. 1220–1291, she ruled as abbess from 1251–1291.
4. An attempt has been made to reconstruct some of the details of daily life in the convent, based on the writings of Gertrude of Helfta. Sister Mary Jeremy, “‘Similitudes’...” in the Writing of Saint Gertrude of Helfta,” *Medieval Studies* 19 (1957) 48–54. She notes also that in the Peasants’ Rebellion of 1525, the books and manuscripts of Helfta were boiled in beer vats.
5. Sr. Mary Jeremy, p. 49.
6. Bynum, p. 175–76.
7. Bynum, p. 175.
8. See for example, Pierre Debongnie, “La Dévotion au coeur de Jésus,” *Les Études Carmélitaines*, (29) pp. 162–173. This devotion is the source of a large percentage of the extensive bibliography on Helfta; see, Bynum, pp. 133n, 177n. Mechtild of Magdeburg appears to have received the first mystical vision of the Sacred Heart, although the other nuns, Gertrude in particular are more prominent in elaborating the devotion. John Howard, “The German Mystic: Mechtild of Magdeburg,” p. 156n, p. 159.
9. Two names have survived, Bynum, p. 176; Eckenstein, p. 329.
10. Bynum, pp. 176, 180–81.
11. Bynum, pp. 173–74, 184–86.
12. Bynum, pp. 184–86. Cf. the reservations of Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Medieval Women’s Visionary Literature*, pp. 210–11.
13. Bynum, p. 180.
14. Bynum, p. 177.
15. The best reconstruction of what can be gleaned from the writings is in Hans Neuman, “Beiträge zur Textgeschichte des ‘Fließenden Lichts der Gottheit’ und zur Lebensgeschichte Mechtilds von Magdeburg.”
16. Howard, 153.
17. Our knowledge of beguine communities is still incomplete, but a good introduction is Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture*. Additional bibliography on beguines is found in Bynum, pp. 182–83n; she points out that we do not know whether Mechtild lived alone or in community, p. 208n.
18. *Offenbarungen der Schwester Mechtild von Magdeburg oder Das fließende Licht der Gottheit*, ed., Gall Morel, 2.26, p. 52 (hereafter, *Licht*). The first numbers are book and chapter references.
19. A later death date (1297) is also proposed; see Petroff, p. 208n.
20. New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. “Mechtild of Magdeburg”.
21. Howard, p. 156nn.

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22. *Licht*, 2.7, pp. 34–35; 3.1, p. 61.
23. Howard, p. 159; a summary of the issues about composition and the manuscript tradition is found pp. 154–57.
24. Howard, p. 154n.
25. Henry of Halle is sometimes thought to be an early translator, but proof is lacking. See Howard, p. 156n.
26. Howard, pp. 156–57.
27. On the translation see Neuman, “Beiträge”.
28. Mechtild prays for him and God promises his reward *Licht*, 2.16, p. 54. She calls him “my schoolmaster,” 7.3, p. 223. On the extent of the reorganization, see Neuman, “Beiträge,” pp. 214–16. There does remain a rough chronology, and some development is evident in the last book, which is less personal, more institutional. Alois M. Haas, “Die Struktura der Mystischen Erfahrung nach Mechtild von Magdeburg”.
29. Odo Egres, “Mechthild von Magdeburg,” pp. 29–31. Lucie Menzies, *The Revelations of Mechthild of Magdeburg*, pp. xxii, xxvi. Greta Lüers, *Die Sprache der deutschen mystik des mittelalters im werke der Mechthild von Magdeburg*, p. 33, Edmund Colledge, “Mechtild of Magdeburg,” pp. 160–61.
30. Howard, p. 156. On her use of dialog, see Hans Tillman, *Studien zur Dialog bei Mechtild von Magdeburg*, and Petroff, pp. 23–30.
31. Letter to Margaret and Christina Ebner, cited Menzies, p. xxiii.
32. Alois M. Haas, “Mechthild von Magdeburg, Dichtung und Mystik,” pp. 66–103. Peter Dronke cites her important contribution to creating a new subjectivity in devotional poetry, *The Medieval Lyric*, Hutchinson University Library. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1968), pp. 78–85.
33. See respectively conception, *Licht*, 3.4, p. 65; 3.9, pp. 69–70; birth, 5.23, p. 148; dew, 1.13, p. 9; 1.22, p. 11; 1.44, p. 19; death, 5.32, pp. 164–65, Menzies trans, p. 157.
34. Menzies, p. xxviii; Howard, pp. 157–59. For courtly themes see Ernest Benz, “Über den Adel in der deutschen Mystik,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 14 (1936) 505–535; Elizabeth Wainwright-de Kadat, “Courtly Love and Mysticism,” pp. 50–61; on the theme of intoxication, Margot Schmidt, “‘minne du gewaltige kellerin’: On the Nature of ‘minne’ in Mechthild’s *Fließendes Licht der Gottheit*,” (hereafter “On the Nature”).
35. Lüers, pp. 213–18. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Mechtilde de Magdeburg (1207–1282)*, pp. 311–13, 88–102.
36. See below, on Mechtild’s philosophical contributions, James C. Franklin, *Mystical Transformations*.
37. Although Le Goff acknowledges in passing the importance of the role of beguines in disseminating the doctrine of purgatory, he does not explore the possibility of their influence on confessors. Interest in purgatory is especially suitable for those who chose a middle way between a religious and secular life. Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). For Mechtild’s visions of heaven, see *Licht*, 3.1; 7.57; for hell, 3.21–22; and purgatory, 3.15; 3.17; 4.25; 5.8.

38. *Licht*, 2.3, p.30. On the extent of her knowledge, Menzies, pp. xvii–iii; Neuman, “Mechthild von Magdeburg und die mittelniederländische Frauenmystik,” pp. 231–32; Ancelet-Hustache, pp. 17–18.
39. Bynum, pp. 237–44, discusses Mechtild’s problems with authoritative roles and her view of powerlessness as a source of freedom and influence with God as well as a source of constraint and temptation in the world.
40. *Licht*, 2.26, p. 53; 4.2, p. 95.
41. *Licht*, 4.2, p. 95.
42. *Licht*, 2.24, pp. 47–48; 2.26, p. 53; 3.21, p. 84; 4.2, pp. 92–93.
43. On the difficulty of loving God while clinging to worldly wisdom, see, *Licht*, 2.19, p. 39; 2.23, p. 44; 3.3, p. 63; 4.3, p. 98; 7.43, p. 257. For Mechtild’s conception of herself as a teacher, see 3.1, pp. 61–62; 6.1, pp. 171–73; 7.8, p. 228; Bynum, pp. 235–36.
44. *Licht*, 2.26, pp. 52–53.
45. *Licht*, 5.12, p. 140.
46. *Licht*, 2.19, p. 38; 3.1, pp. 61–62; 4.13, p. 107; 6.43, p. 215. Bynum discusses Mechtild’s anxiety over the assumption of masculine roles, and her sense of male and female roles, pp. 184–5, 228, 241–45. Cf. Petroff, pp. 23–24. For the view that the criticism refers to her use of masculine pronouns, see Howard, p. 155.
47. Howard, p. 155, cf. *Licht*, preface, p. 3; 4.2, p. 95; 4.13 p. 107; 5.32, p. 164; 5.34, p. 167; 7.8, p. 228; 7.21, p. 237.
48. Ancelet-Hustache, pp. 17–21, 27–28.
49. Ancelet-Hustache, pp. 14–15, 26–27; Lüers, pp. 36–39.
50. Neuman, “Mechthild von Magdeburg”. But cf. Frances Gooday, “Mechthild of Magdeburg and Hadewijch of Antwerp: A Comparison,” *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 48 (1974) 304–62.
51. Ancelet-Hustache, pp. 18, 27–28, 54–59.
52. Menzies, p. 1; Ancelet-Hustache pp. 12, 14–15, 21–25; Bynum, p. 235. References to Dominicans are frequent and may lie behind her use of dog imagery, but the possibility of strong Franciscan influences on Mechtild and other beguines should not be forgotten.
53. Ancelet-Hustache, pp. 24–25.
54. For a brief discussion of neoplatonic and albertist influences, see Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 431–47.
55. See respectively, Emil Michael, cited Howard, n. 33, pp. 162–63, Ancelet-Hustache p. 13, Howard, p. 159.
56. Bynum, p. 178, cf. Petroff, pp. 210–11.
57. Ancelet-Hustache p. 3, Neuman, “Beiträge,” p. 176.
58. Howard, p. 157n, says she was unknown after the early fifteenth century, but Colledge, p. 170, mentions a sixteenth century nun who copied a prayer of Mechtild (5.35), and an early seventeenth century reference is cited by Margot Schmidt, “‘die spilende minnevlüt’ Der Eros als Sein und Wirkkraft in der Trinität bei Mechthild von Magdeburg,” p. 82n (hereafter “Eros”).
59. See for example a popular devotional work, Sue Woodruff, *Meditations with Mechtild of Magdeburg*, Sante Fe: Bear and Co., n.d.; Horst Laubner, *Studien zum geistlichen Sinngehalt des Adjektivs im Werk Mechthilds von*

- Magdeburg*; Hans-Georg Kemper, "Allegorische Allegorese: Zur Bildlichkeit und Struktur mystischer Literature (Mechthild von Magdeburg und Angelus Silesius)," *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie*, Symposium, ed., W. Haug (Wolfenbüttel: 1978), 90–125. Friedrich-Wilhelm Wentzlaff-Eggebert, *Deutsche Mystik zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, esp. pp. 47–59.
60. Wentzlaff-Eggebert, pp. 47–59; Bynum, pp. 246–49nn; College, pp. 163–68.
 61. Hans Neuman, "Mechthild von Magdeburg," pp. 170–71; Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhardt: Theologe. Prediger. Mystiker*, (München, Verlag C.H. Beck, 1985), pp. 97–100, 192–94; Louis Cognet, *Introduction aux Mystiques Rhéno-Flamands* (Paris: Desclée et Cie), 1968, pp. 16–23; Emilie Zum Brunn et Alain de Libera, *Maître Eckhardt, Métaphysique de Verbe et Théologie Négative*, Bibliothèque des Archives de Philosophie, n.s. 42 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), pp. 51–58, 206–07; Herman Kunisch, *Das Wort "Grund" in der Sprache der deutschen Mystik des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, diss. (Osnabrück: Gebr. Pagenkämper, 1929), pp. 91–102.
 62. See for example, J.M. Clark, *The Great German Mystics: Eckhart, Tauler and Suso* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949), pp. 4–6, drawing on the work of Denifle and Grundmann.
 63. Kurt Ruh, "Beginnenmystik," and "Meister Eckhardt und die Spiritualität der Beginnen," *Perspectiven der Philosophie. Neues Jahrbuch* bd. 8 (1982) 323–334. Reprinted in *Kleinen Schriften II: Scholastik und Mystik im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985). Peter Dinzelsacker, "Überblick," pp. 14–15, 16–17. Jean Leclercq, Francoise Vandenbroucke, Louis Boyer, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages, A History of Christian Spirituality*, v. 2 (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), 374–75, 384–85, 388, 449.
 64. Franklin, p. 35.
 65. Franklin, pp. 34, 35.
 66. Franklin, pp. 34, 37.
 67. Franklin, p. 166. On a similar transformation in connection with love in Augustine, see Étienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch, (New York: Random House, 1960), pp. 134–36, 162–63.
 68. Franklin, p. 167.
 69. Franklin, p. 167.
 70. Franklin, pp. 169–70.
 71. See above, n. 67. There is no evidence that Mechtild had Augustine in mind.
 72. Lüers, pp. 249–53; Schmidt, "On the Nature," and "Eros," pp. 83–86; Franklin, pp. 90, 95–96 p. 90.
 73. Even for Mechtild, there is stillness beyond motion. Franklin, pp. 95–97; Schmidt, "Eros," pp. 83–85.
 74. *Licht*, 6.22, p. 199; 6.31, pp. 205–06.
pp. 180–81; it prefigures the love of the next world, 4.25, p. 120; 5.18–19, pp. 142–43; 7.7, pp. 225–26. Schmidt, On the nature, sees creation as mirroring the internal structure of the Trinity.
 75. The structure of the present world is love. *Licht*, 5.35, pp. 168–69; 6.4–6.5, pp. 180–181; it prefigures the love of the next world, 4.25, p. 120; 5.18–19,

- pp. 142–43; 7.7, pp. 225–26. Schmidt, “On the Nature”, sees creation as mirroring the internal structure of the Trinity.
76. *Licht*, 3.1, pp. 55–62; 3.21–23, pp. 82–88; Purgatory is also seen as reflecting the love of the soul for God, God’s love for the soul, and the love of the living for the dead. *Licht*, 2.8, pp. 35–36; 4.25, pp. 119–120; 7.39, pp. 254–56; 7.55, pp. 268–70.
77. *Licht*, 2.22, pp. 42–43; 3.1, pp. 55–62.
78. *Licht*, 2.3, p. 29; 2.22, pp. 42–43; 4.14, pp. 107–108; 7.34, p. 247.
79. *Licht*, 4.2, p. 95.
80. *Licht*, 3.9, pp. 68–71; 4.28, p. 127; 6.15, pp. 191–92; 6.31, pp. 205–06.
81. *Licht*, 2.19, p. 40.
82. *Licht*, 1.44, pp. 18–22; 3.9, p. 69; 3.10, pp. 71–72; 4.12, pp. 103–04; 6.4–5, pp. 179–80.
83. *Licht*, 7.16, p. 270; 1.3–4, pp. 6–7; 1.22, pp. 11–12; 2.19, p. 39; 2.25, pp. 50–52; 3.9, pp. 68–71.
84. *Licht*, 1.23–24, pp. 13–14.
85. *Licht*, 1.22–24, pp. 11–13; 1.44, p. 21–22; 1.39–43, p. 18; 2.3, pp. 27–29; 6.1, p. 174; 6.31, p. 205.
86. The soul is created in love, as a nature, *Licht*, 1.3–4, pp. 6–7; it lives in love as in an element, 1.44, pp. 21–22; 3.9, pp. 68–70; its highest quality is love, 2.26, p. 53; God and the soul are united in love 2.3, pp. 27–29; 2.4, pp. 31–32; bound by love, 4.19, p. 114.
87. Schmidt, “Eros,” pp. 77–75, and “Elemente der Schau bei Mechtild von Magdeburg und Mechtild von Hackeborn. Zur Bedeutung der geistlichen Sinne,” pp. 124–25 (hereafter “Schau”). The formulation derives from Abelard. Kurt Ruh, “Die trinitarische Spekulation in deutschen Mystik und Scholastik,” *Kleine Schriften II: Scholastik und Mystik im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), pp. 19–20.
88. *Licht*, 1.40–41, p. 18; 2.19, p. 38; 6.1, pp. 174, 176; 6.16, pp. 194–95; 6.31, pp. 205–06.
89. *Licht*, 7.1, p. 219, Menzies trans., p. 208; 5.6, p. 135.
90. *Licht*, 2.19, p. 38, Menzies trans., p. 41.
91. *Licht*, 4.5, p. 101.
92. *Licht*, 5.35, p. 168; 2.22, pp. 41–42; 3.9, pp. 68–71; 4.8, p. 102; 4.14, pp. 107–08; Bynum, pp. 233–34.
93. *Licht*, 5.16, pp. 141–42; 5.1, pp. 128–29; 5.1, pp. 128–29. Note the role of grace in repentance, 4.5–6, pp. 101–12; and in forgiveness, 5.19, p. 143.
94. *Licht*, 3.21–22, pp. 84–87; Bynum, pp. 231–33, 247.
95. *Licht*, 2.22, p. 43, 4.4, p. 108; 4.5–6, pp. 101–02.
96. *Licht*, 3.9, pp. 68–70; 4.14, p. 108; 5.29, p. 160; 6.13, pp. 187–88.
97. *Licht*, 6.31, p. 205; 6.13, pp. 187–88; 3.4, p. 65; 5.8, pp. 135–37.
98. *Licht*, 2.4, pp. 30–34; 6.16–18, pp. 193–95; 6.30–31, pp. 205–07; 7.61, pp. 273–74.
99. *Licht*, 7.31, p. 244; 7.55, p. 269; 6.4–5, pp. 179–88; 6.1, pp. 171–73; 6.41 pp. 214–15; 7.62, pp. 275–77; 3.2, pp. 62–63.
100. On God, *Licht*, 2.8, pp. 35–36; 3.15, pp. 77–78; 5.34, pp. 166–67; 6.6, pp. 181–

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- 82; 7.62, pp. 275–76. On the soul, 3.1, p. 61; 4.12, pp. 104–07; 7.33, p. 246; 7.55, pp. 268–29; 7.65, p. 280.
101. *Licht*, 4.12, pp. 106–07; 5.16, pp. 141–42.
102. Suffering as imitation and sharing with Christ, *Licht*, 5.2–3, pp. 130–31; 3.16, p. 78; 7.53, p. 267; 7.56, p. 270; as expiation, 2.7, pp. 34–35; 3.16–17, pp. 78–79; 5.2, p. 120; 6.31, pp. 205–06; 7.33–34, pp. 246–47; Bynum, p. 230–33.
103. *Licht*, 7.55, pp. 268–70; 5.11, pp. 138–40; 5.4, pp. 131–33; 5.26, p. 158; Franklin, pp. 38–9, 43–45, 45–47.
104. *Licht*, 2.4, p. 32; 3.12, p. 74; 7.55, p. 270; 6.4, p. 180; 1.3, pp. 6–7; 2.23, p. 44.
105. *Licht*, 3.9, pp. 68–71; 5.16, p. 141.
106. *Licht*, 6.20, pp. 197–98; 5.4, pp. 131–33; 7.1, p. 219.
107. *Licht*, 1.3, pp. 6–7; 2.3, pp. 27–38; 7.7, pp. 225–26; 7.55, pp. 268–70.
108. *Licht*, 6.1, pp. 175–76; 3.5, pp. 66–67.
109. *Licht*, 6.1, p. 174; 3.9, p. 70; 4.14, pp. 108–09; 5.35, p. 168; 3.1, p. 58.
110. Colledge, p. 163, says the self is annihilated, but Mechtild seems to mean self-will, rather than personal identity is lost in God. *Licht*, 1.2, p. 5; 1.22, pp. 11–12; 1.39–44, pp. 18–22; self will, 2.4, pp. 32–33; 2.3, p. 28. She uses images of exchange and equal measure, 2.23, p. 45; 4.15, p. 109; mixed fluids, 2.5–6, p. 34; 1.4, p. 7; illumination, 7.55, pp. 269–70. On the sense of self which Mechtild indicates by the term “grund”, see Hermann Kunisch, *Das Wort “Grund”* pp. 92–93, 100–02.
111. The soul is a friend and housewife with God, 3.1, pp. 59–60; 4.14, pp. 108–09; 7.3, pp. 222–23; but especially a lover, 1.44, pp. 23–25; 2.19, pp. 38–40; 2.22, p. 43; 2.25, pp. 49–52; 3.23, p. 88; Bynum, pp. 243–44.
112. *Licht*, 1.28, p. 15; 1.39–43, pp. 18–19; 1.44, pp. 20–22; 2.23, p. 44; 5.8, p. 140; 5.30, p. 161; 7.16, p. 232.
113. *Licht*, 1.39–44, pp. 18–22; 1.46, pp. 24–25; 2.25, pp. 49–52; 3.23, p. 88; 5.25, p. 157.
114. *Licht*, 7.1, pp. 219–20.
115. Schmidt, “On the Nature.” See n. 71 above on union beyond motion and even knowledge; *Licht*, 1.2, p. 5; 1.44, p. 22; 3.24, p. 90; 3.1, pp. 58, 59–61; 4.12, p. 104.
116. Although Mechtild is a very sensual poet, she is not a nature poet; Lüers, p. 237, Howard, p. 157n.
117. *Licht*, 1.2, p. 5; 3.5, p. 66; 4.2, p. 94, 5.22, pp. 145–46. Franklin overemphasizes this negative aspect of the relation, pp. 58–63, 158–59.
118. *Licht*, 1.3, p. 6; 1.46, p. 24; 4.8, p. 102; 4.12, pp. 103–06. Cf. Franklin pp. 59–60, 37–42, 46–52.
119. *Licht*, 5.22, pp. 145–47; 6.6, pp. 180–81; 6.15, p. 189; 6.26, pp. 201–02; 6.30, p. 205.
120. See Ancelet-Hustache, pp. 87–102 for a discussion of the relation between ordinary and visionary experiences.
121. *Licht*, 6.31, pp. 205–06; 2.3, p. 28; 5.4, pp. 131–33.
122. Schmidt, “Schau”, cf. Pierre Doyère, “Sainte Gertrude et les sens spirituels,” *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* 36 (1960), 434n.
123. *Licht*, 6.31, pp. 205–0; 5.22, pp. 145–46; 7.7, pp. 225–26.

124. *Licht*, 6.4–5, pp. 179–80; Menzies trans., p. 171.
125. *Licht*, 6.30, p. 205.
126. *Licht*, 2.1, p. 26; 2.22, pp. 42–43; 5.4, pp. 131–32.
127. *Licht*, 2.23, p. 44; 5.22, p. 130; 7.48, p. 264.
128. See above, nn. 42–43. *Licht*, 5.4, pp. 131–33; 7.8, p. 227 sums the journey to God through suffering, virtue, knowledge and love.
129. *Licht*, 7.47, p. 260.
130. *Licht*, 7.1, p. 219; 2.25, pp. 51–52. Mechtild remains much more concrete than Bernard, in whose view loving Christ's humanity is still a carnal stage of love, cf. *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, XX.
131. *Licht*, 6.15, p. 191.
132. God addresses the soul through the senses, *Licht*, 5.4, pp. 131–33; 6.23, p. 200; 6.31, p. 205–06; they are active in both choice and uniting love, 5.11, pp. 139–40; 7.46, pp. 259–60; 4.3, p. 95; and in heaven, 2.3, pp. 28–29; 6.29, pp. 203–04.
133. *Licht*, 6.26, pp. 201–02; 1.26, p. 14; 5.21, p. 144.
134. *Licht*, 1.44, pp. 18–22.
135. *Licht*, 2.19, pp. 38–40.
136. *Licht*, 7.17, pp. 232–33; trans. Menzies, p. 221.
137. *Licht*, 5.11, pp. 139–40, 7.43, pp. 257–58; 1.21, p. 10.
138. *Licht*, 2.19, pp. 38–40; Menzies trans., pp. 43–44.
139. *Licht*, 4.3, pp. 95–98.
140. *Licht*, 6.4, pp. 179–80; 6.23, p. 200; 7.27, p. 241; 7.46, p. 260; 7.58, p. 272; 7.62, p. 276.
141. *Licht*, 4.18, p. 112; 5.23, p. 151; 7.3, p. 223.
142. *Licht*, 6.29, pp. 203–04; 2.15, p. 37; 2.19, pp. 39–40; 5.11, pp. 139–40; 7.14, p. 231; 7.17, p. 234.
143. *Licht*, 7.62, pp. 276–77; 7.11, p. 229; 6.41, pp. 214–15; 4.18, pp. 112–13; 7.32, p. 246; the recognition of God 4.4, p. 107.
144. *Licht*, 2.24, pp. 47–48, 6.15, p. 191; see n. 42 above.
145. *Licht*, 7.1, pp. 216, 219; 2.25, pp. 51–52; 4.14, pp. 108–09; 5.11, pp. 138–40.
146. *Licht*, 1.21, p. 42.
147. *Licht*, 6.14, pp. 188–89; 7.32, pp. 245–46; 7.65, pp. 280–81.
148. *Licht*, 6.15, p. 189; 3.7, p. 74; 7.7 pp. 225–27; 7.48–49, pp. 263–64.
149. *Licht*, 2.3, p. 28; 3.9, pp. 68–70. Schmidt, "On the Nature."
150. *Licht*, 4.14, pp. 107–09; 6.29, p. 204.
151. *Licht*, 1.44, p. 20; 4.23, pp. 118–19; both are in heaven, 5.4, pp. 134–35; 2.3, pp. 28–29; 6.22, p. 199; 6.26, p. 202; 7.1, pp. 219–20.
152. *Licht*, 2.25, p. 48; 3.1, p. 56; 4.13, p. 107; 6.22–23, pp. 199–200; 6.36, p. 210; 7.59, pp. 272–73. Her metaphors of ineffability are particularly charming – see especially, 1.2, pp. 4–5, and 3.1, p. 60.
153. *Licht*, 2.3, p. 28; 3.1, pp. 60–61; 6.30, p. 205.
154. *Licht*, 6.19, p. 196; 5.5, p. 134; 6.7, p. 182; 7.36, pp. 249–51. In accord with the beguine way of life, obedience claims a slightly different place than in most monastic writers, not being focussed so directly on an immediate superior.

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155. Chastity is generally viewed positively as dedication and single-mindedness rather than as a struggle against temptation and pollution; her attitude toward the married, the widowed and children is unfailingly tender and supportive. *Licht*, 1.44, p. 20; 3.1, pp. 57, 59–60, 61; 5.24, p. 155; 7.37, pp. 251–53.
156. *Licht*, 6.1–2, pp. 171–78; 4.17; pp. 110–11; 3.21, p. 86; 4.17, pp. 110–11; 5.35, p. 169.
157. Lüers, p. 69, Wainwright-de Kadt, pp. 53–54.
158. *Licht*, 5.23, p. 151; 6.1, pp. 171–723.
159. *Licht*, 5.22, pp. 145–46, 5.23, p. 151; 6.1, pp. 172–73; 7.2, p. 221.
160. *Licht*, 4.18–19, pp. 111–14, 5.22, pp. 145–46; 5.28, pp. 159–60; 7.17, p. 233; 7.32, pp. 245–46.
161. *Licht*, 7.36, pp. 49–51; 7.62, pp. 276–78.

7. Hadewych of Antwerp

CORNELIA WOLFSKEEL

I. BACKGROUND

Like Hildegard of Bingen and the nuns of Helfta, Hadewych of Antwerp and Beatrice of Nazareth are mystics. Their mysticism, like that of other Western Christian mystics is characterized by the important role of reason in the soul's ascension to God and by its strong ethical implications. Western Christian mysticism of the Middle Ages is greatly indebted to the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Gregory of Nyssa played an important part in the development of Western Christian mysticism,¹ linking Philo of Alexandria and the Alexandrians through the Neoplatonist Plotinus to Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus Confessor and Byzantine mysticism. Although later mediaeval writers, such as Hugh and Richard of St. Victor and others, preferred to comment on Dionysius the Areopagite, they are indirectly but immensely indebted to Gregory of Nyssa. For example, while Hadewych² is influenced by Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, like Gregory of Nyssa, in her *Ep.* 10 she stressed the ethical implications of the Love of God: "The works of virtue are the measure of our love, not the sweetness of devotion." Long before Eckhart³ Hadewych – and the same holds for Beatrice of Nazareth – taught that one should be able to withdraw from the mystical enjoyment of the divine Love in order to dedicate himself to the love of the neighbour. An anthology of Hadewych's 10th letter, which is strongly influenced by Richard of St. Victor is found in a 14th century German manuscript in Berlin (H.S. Germ. 8^e, 12, Königliche Bibliothek, Berlin). Hadewych is called Adelwip here. From Hadewych's own writings we know that she had contacts in Germany, such as in Köln and in Saxony. Hadewych's influence on

the well-known 14th century mystic Jan van Ruusbroec is unmistakable. Ruusbroec's writing *Van den Twelve Bheginen*, Ch. 219–220 bears the impress of Hadewych's 22nd letter, which deals with the ineffability of God, the mystery of the Trinity, God's image in the soul, the exemplarism and other topics. Hadewych herself is indebted to Augustine through Hugh of St. Victor⁴ and to Dionysius Areopagite,⁵ as we shall see below. She is also affected by the influence of William of St. Thierry, especially in her 18th letter.⁶ William of St. Thierry, in his turn, was strongly influenced by Gregory of Nyssa.⁷

The so-called *Limburgian Sermons*,⁸ a 14th century writing, consisting of 48 sermons, of which 32 are of German origin, clearly show the influence of Hadewych's first and 18th letters in the sermons 39 and 43, while sermon 42 is an adaptation of Beatrice's writing *The seven modes of sacred Love*.⁹ Godefridus de Wevel, the author of *Van den Twelve Dogheden* (= *On the 12 Virtues*), is also indebted to Hadewych's 27th and 12th letters. Jan van Leeuwen,¹⁰ the good cook of the convent Groenendaal tells how Hadewych's writings were famous among the religious people of his day.

During the 12th century the convents in the Low Countries became increasingly interested in Plato and in Neoplatonism as well. Neoplatonic concepts were frequently used by pious and religious people in the Low Countries in the 13th century, for describing mystical experiences. It was Hadewych who found the Dutch translation of the Latin translation of these concepts.¹¹ Literate people used the Latin language to express themselves in spiritual matters¹² before Hadewych made the Dutch language appropriate for this purpose. Hadewych made the Dutch people acquainted with Platonic and Neoplatonic concepts. People could recognize these concepts, when they found them in the writings of St. Augustine, Dionysius Areopagite and Gregory of Nyssa.¹³ Thanks to Hadewych they became at least conscious of the origin of these Platonic and Neoplatonic concepts in the writings of the Church Fathers they read.

Since at least the 12th century there were well-educated women, the *mulieres disciplinatae*, educated in the so-called *artes liberales*.¹⁴ They were not only found in the convents, but in the outside world as well, especially among the religious and pious women of the ecstatic religious movement which developed in the countries near

the Rhine at the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century.¹⁵ The women of this movement lived together in the *begijnenhoven* (courts of *beghinae*).¹⁶ At the request of Jean de Vitry, Pope Honorius III¹⁷ officially gave these women his permission to live together and to teach themselves. Their courts can still be found in many cities of the Low Countries.¹⁸ The “*beghinae*” (*beguines*) occupied themselves with religious studies and teaching young girls.¹⁹ Their works of charity included taking care of the sick, as we shall elucidate below. Hadewych probably belonged to a group of “*beghinae*.”

II. BIOGRAPHY

We do not know much about Hadewych's life. From the contents of her writings²⁰ it becomes clear that she lived and wrote before 1260.²¹ Hadewych lived in a period of time when the Holy Communion was still received by the laity in both species (bread and wine) (*Visions* 7, 70). Since this custom was abolished in 1261,²² she apparently lived before that date. Hadewych mentions the already-deceased Hildegard of Bingen in her so-called list of perfect persons. However, she does not yet call Hildegard a saint, as she was generally called by the Benedictines in the second half of the 13th century. The names of master Robert, a great inquisitor, and of Henric of Brabant, which appear in Hadewych's *Visions* also tend to date her to the first half of the 13th century.

Hadewych lived during the period when love-mysticism was cultivated in the Low Countries and in Germany. She mentions that the practice of Love-Mysticism was widely spread among the *beguines*. Her letters, in most of which she addresses a *soete lieve kint* (a dearly beloved child)²³ show that the mystical worship of Christ as the most perfect Love was part of the religious life of the *beguines*. Hadewych seems to have been of noble birth. She knew noble men and women in the Low Countries and abroad (*Vis.* I, 175). She seems to have had telepathic contacts with a woman in Cologne in Germany (Lady Lana of Cologne).²⁴ When she wrote her *Visions*, she lived near a Church (*Vis.* VII, 7 and IX, 1), but not in a convent. She used to recite the *Breviarium Romanum*. The church where she used to attend services consequently was neither

Cistercian nor Benedictine.²⁵ In the period when she wrote the *Visions* Hadewych lived in one place, which was known to the person for whom she wrote the *Visions*. It is highly probable that Hadewych came from Antwerp. A manuscript of the so-called Rooklooster (the Rooconvent) near Brussels (now in Vienna, Austria)²⁶ reads:

De beata Hadewycha de Antwerpia. Sic cognominatur in catalogo variarum bibliothecarum Belgii circa annum 1487.²⁷

This testimony is late, but there is no reason to doubt it, since it is highly probable that the information of the catalogue from the Rooklooster goes back to that of the much older catalogue of St. Martensdaal. Since her work does not show any influence of Aristotelian scholasticism, Hadewych died probably before 1250. Hadewych's personality is that of a woman gifted with a strong, passionate character, who had all the qualities of leadership. Her writings, which we shall discuss more in detail below, are of a very high literary quality. Hadewych is called "a mountain between the hills" of the Dutch mountainous country of the literature of the Middle Ages by great scholars of mediaeval Dutch²⁸ literature. She undoubtedly shaped mediaeval Dutch into a more cultivated form and made it more suitable to express a world of philosophical thinking, for which Latin had been the appropriate language. Her writings, especially the so-called *Strophic Poems*, show that she was acquainted with the French courtly poetry of the minstrels, which came into existence in the middle of the 12th century in the south of France. This poetry, of which the main representative is Chrétien de Troyes, glorifies pure love which does not aim at the unification of two bodies, but at the ascent of two hearts to their glorious unification surpassing all possible earthly love. This pure love so highly praised by the minstrels has nothing to do with marriage, which implies the union of the bodies. "Amor" is the sublime "Eros," the rising of two hearts to their glorious union, which is considered of much greater value than any earthly and carnal love. It is the intention of the courtly epic poetry to express *l'élan de la passion dans sa pureté mystique* according to D. De Rougemont in "*L'amour et l'occident*."²⁹ The concept of this pure love of the beloved, which is unfulfilled forever, is worded in a new and artistic

lyrical genre.³⁰ Hadewych uses and modifies this lyrical genre in her poetry to express her worship of *Minne* or Love Itself. She identifies *Minne* with Jesus Christ Himself in many passages³¹ in her poetry and prose. *Minne*,³² the main topic of Hadewych's writings, is a queen, who has her seat in God Himself (*Visions* 13, 66). The service of *Minne* is comparable to that of the courtly poetry. The ethical ideal is wrapped in the aesthetic ideal (*Ep.* XII, 15). One must render beautiful service to *Minne* (*Ep.* 6, 86–90), which is always connected with virtue. “*Minne* is everything” (*Ep.* 25; *Vision* 8). One must live to follow Christ in His divinity and in His humanity (*Ep.* 6). The passion of Christ, who never made use of His divine power in His own favour to avoid suffering, holds a very important place in Hadewych's mysticism. One's true love of God is marked by faithful and persistent virtue, which does not demand any reward or consolation. It is this kind of love, which leads to Love itself (*Ep.* 10).

III. HADEWYCH'S DOCTRINE

It seems appropriate to discuss Hadewych's doctrine, in particular, her concepts of God and of man, before going into a more detailed discussion of some passages in her writings.

1. *Hadewych's Concept of God*

There is one God, immense, ineffable, incomprehensible. God is one in the essence of His nature. He is threefold in the persons. The Son goes out from the Father as independent Knowledge. Here Hadewych seems to have followed St Augustine, who identified the eternal *Logos* with *Sapientia* (Wisdom) or *Scientia* (Knowledge) in his early philosophical Dialogues.³³ Hadewych calls the Son *Waarheid* in *Strophic Poems* 15, 12 and 30. This is also an Augustinian concept.³⁴ The Holy Spirit goes out from the Father and the Son as an independent Love (*Vis.* 8, 83). This originally is an Augustinian concept also. Hadewych uses a symbol to express the Trinity (*Vis.* I, 220). It is a seat in the shape of a disc, supported by three columns. God is Creator and the only cause of creation. The

creatures are outside God (*Vis.* 8, 108 and 13, 100). However, they have their archetypal example in God.³⁵ Hadewych presupposes the doctrine of the *causa exemplaris* (the exemplarism), a doctrine also found in St. Augustine's writings. St. Augustine was convinced that the Platonic Ideas³⁶ were in the mind of God (*De quaestionibus* 83, n. 46).³⁷ This doctrine is also found in St. Thomas.³⁸ The doctrine of the *causa exemplaris* certainly has its consequences for Hadewych's concept of man.

2. *Hadewych's Concept of Man*

Man is a being, consisting of an immortal soul and a mortal body (*Vis.* I, 38). The soul has eternal life in God (*Vis.* 8, 104), for like all created things it has its archetype in God, in whom there is eternal life. Man's real life is in God from all eternity. In God we live together with God in His own life, because we have a created and an uncreated life (*Vis.* XI, 5–7; *Vis.* XI, 93). The purpose of man's creation is that man may rejoice³⁹ in God in all eternity; God also rejoices Himself in us (*Ep.* 18, 83).⁴⁰ Man's life on earth has to be a striving for the unification with the *blote waarheid*, the "nude truth," that is, with the Divine Love or Christ Himself (*Strophic Poems* 30).

Hadewych's concept of the soul reminds us of that of St. Augustine in a certain respect. Man's rational soul is made in the image of God according to St. Augustine who taught that the soul had three faculties, to wit, 1. memory and consciousness, 2. intelligence and 3. will (*De Trinitate* X, 11, 14). These faculties correspond to the three persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Hadewych mentions this Augustinian doctrine, which was generally accepted in the Middle Ages, in her 4th *Letter*.⁴² According to Hadewych (*Ep.* 18)⁴³ our soul has two eyes,⁴⁴ reason and love. This natural love is a divine gift, by which the soul can strive for unification with God. The soul is also supported by supernatural Love in its efforts to become unified with God. Van Mierlo suggests Hugh of St. Victor as Hadewych's source in reference to this process. "God's unifying power takes us back to the unity of the Father who brings together, and to the divine oneness." According to Hadewych (*Vis.* 14, 140) there is love of God in us. That is why man wants to return to God. So it seems that our natural love

(*caritate*) is helped by the divine Love to fulfil the task of returning to God, which is man's destiny in his life on earth.⁴⁵ The other eye of the soul, reason, which is illuminated by God, unmistakably has its own legitimate task to fulfil in the mystical ascent of the soul to God. Reason can never be disregarded (*Vis.* 12).⁴⁶ It has to lead the soul to *Minne* Herself. However, *Minne* is more than reason. When in the process of the ascent to God (*Vis.* 8, 117; *Vis.* 9) reason has fulfilled its legitimate function (that is, when it has come to meet Truth Itself)⁴⁷ it is *Minne* Herself who assumes leadership.⁴⁸ At the highest stage of the ascent the soul must yield itself to *Minne*. At this level when reason has fulfilled its legitimate task, it is no longer of any importance to the soul which is in the power of *Minne*. The soul becomes "Godlike" in the unification with *Minne*⁴⁹ without losing its own independence. Godlikeness (*deiformitas*, *godvormichheid*) means conformity to the will of God.

The way leading to the rejoicement of Divine Love through reason, has ethical implications. It implies the *dogheden* or virtues. This doctrine has Platonic features, which are also present in Augustine's writings. The aim of human life, as Hadewych describes it in the *Visions*, is to follow Christ. This means to live with Him in His divinity and in His humanity as well. The latter does not merely mean suffering, labour and hardship, but also the perfect practice of virtue (*Vis.* I). As long as the soul cannot cope with the demands of reason, that is, as long as it is not ornate with perfect virtues, it will not allow itself to indulge in the rejoicing of Love, which is part of the mystical ascent to God. Hadewych's spirituality is not confined to intuitive contemplation, as that of the Victorines is. On the contrary, her spirituality has very practical consequences. Whoever assumes the duties of *Minne* must occupy himself with the works of charity. Hadewych is a true representative of the Dutch mystical movement in stressing this aspect of the service of *Minne*.⁵⁰ *Minne's* knight has to fight continuously to make his will accord with the will of God.

IV. WORKS

1. *Visions*

The *Visions* were probably written for Hadewych's confessor. All

the *Visions* have a strongly intellectual character, representing metaphysical concepts of God and the soul. They are founded on an intellectual and speculative system of mysticism. Hadewych considered the visions which she had and which she described in her *Visions*, to the gifts of grace and consolations for the soul (*Vis.* 13, 104). Hadewych's *Visions* are, with the exception of *Vision VII* intellectual imaginations of the soul's self perceptions. Only the seventh *Vision* is considered to rely on a sensual experience, caused by an outward appearance. The claim to live with Christ in His sufferings is very important in the *Visions*, the central idea of which is to become like Christ in His humanity and in His hardships thereby to possess Him in His divinity.

(a) *Vision I.* The first *Vision* is an allegorical presentation of the whole spiritual life on its highest level. It is founded on self-knowledge. Humility is the first virtue; it protects all other virtues. When Hadewych is brought into the plain of the perfect virtues, this is the first tree to which she is guided. Virtue must be practised with good judgement, guided by Reason. This is the way that leads to the tree of true Wisdom, which is the fifth tree in the orchard (number two is self-knowledge, number three perfect Will and number four the Discernment by Reason). The lowest grade of Wisdom is still characterized by Fear.⁵¹ However, the soul guided by purity, a higher grade of Wisdom, will reach that level of Wisdom, where it is free from that fear and does not only bear *Minne*, but is also completely one with *Minne*. The soul rises up from the multiplicity of the various virtues of Love Itself. In this way, Hadewych arrives at the sixth tree which is symbolically standing with its roots upward. This is the tree of the Knowledge of God. When she has achieved this Knowledge, she is guided by the angel to the seventh tree, that of the Knowledge of Love. Here Christ Himself addresses the soul and explains the significance of the tree. Here, on this highest level, Hadewych is allowed to see the eternity of the Trinitarian God in the symbol of the disc, supported by three columns. Here the soul must conform its will completely to the will of God. It must suffer with Christ, as Christ has suffered in His humanity. Christ promises to give Hadewych's soul the understanding of His will, which is Love. Moreover, He promises to give her the feeling of Love of Himself and occasionally the opportunity of "enjoying

Him.”⁵² Hadewych is allowed to take a leaf and rose from the seventh tree.⁵³ These are the symbols of these highest grades of Love. Now the soul has reached the third grade of development which is comparable to the so-called *via unifica*. Here the real mystical life begins.

(b)*Vision II*. Hadewych receives the grace of illumination on Pentecost. She learns what the whole will of Love is, and which is the stage of perfection to fulfill this will of Love. She also receives the gift of tongues. This *Vision* is founded on the doctrine that all life and being is in God. This doctrine, previously taught by Dionysius Areopagite, is held by many visionary persons of the Middle Ages.

(c)*Vision III*. Hadewych learns who “Love” is. She will know who Christ in His divinity is when she follows Christ in His humanity in her own way of life. In this *Vision* Hadewych speaks of the soul as a being which is of divine origin from all eternity. She expresses herself in a way which makes clear that she was strongly indebted to the Apocalypse (*Revelations*).⁵⁴

(d)*Vision IV*. Christ’s humility and the necessity for a human being to live in accordance with the life of Christ are the main topics of *Vision IV*, as they were in *Vision III*. The soul can become “godlike” in following Christ. Christ and the soul are represented as two Kingdoms of equal beauty and greatness. These Kingdoms become heavens, which are also both equal. In this symbolic way Hadewych expresses the divine origin of the soul. Christ speaks to Hadewych (line 72): “Now be me one, unified with thy Beloved, and be thou my beloved, beloved with me.”

(e)*Vision V*. Hadewych sees the three highest heavens which were revealed in parables to St. John in his *Revelations*. She prays to God, asking why He does not grant her companions the experience of the Divine Love. She is no longer a Lucifer, who claims such a favour on the grounds of his own merits. She has learned to make her own will in accordance with the will of God. Therefore, she has the courage to ask God a grace in favour of her companions. Then the three heavens are explained to Hadewych as a symbol of God.

She is elevated by God and permitted to enjoy Him, as she will eternally rejoice in Him in heaven.

(f)*Vision VI.* This *Vision* clearly shows Hadewych's intellectual attitude. Hadewych wants to know how God receives those who lose themselves in Him and are absorbed in the rejoicement of God. She is curious how God let those people share in Himself. She sees a mighty throne on which her Beloved is rested. An angel presents her to Him. In the contemplation of the face of her Beloved, Hadewych understands everything: why some are doomed, why others are given according to their merits. Hadewych sees God's omnipresence, which she expresses (l. 67) in a paradoxical way reminding us of Dionysius Areopagite. It is explained to Hadewych how God is when the soul is in the state of enjoying God and when it is in the state of knowing God, and also when it is in the state of total absorption in God, when it does not know anymore (l. 86 – *buten alle verstannesse van el yet te wetene . . .*).⁵⁵

(g)*Vision VII.* The *Vision* mentions how at Pentecost in the church Hadewych was physically affected by a great desire for Love and was captured by Love. She remarks that heart, nerves and limbs were trembling. She did not feel able to describe this experience in a comprehensible way. Even those who knew of the desire for *Minne* would not have understood her, so overwhelming is the experience. She wants to enjoy, to know and to taste her Beloved, as much as possible (l. 20–25). When she is feeling terrible, she suddenly sees an eagle coming, flying from the altar in her direction. The eagle becomes Christ as a three year old child. This child becomes the man Jesus Christ, as soon as He has taken His body from the tabernacle and has taken a chalice which seemed to come from the altar, in His hand. Christ gives Hadewych the Holy Communion. Afterwards He comes to her and embraces her. Hadewych experiences all this as something which comes to her from outside. This holds for her vision, her taste and her feelings. The sensual description of Christ's embrace seems to have the significance of the unification with Christ's humanity, an important topic in Hadewych's mysticism.

(h)*Vision VIII.* The main topic in *Vis. 8* is again – like in all other *Visions* – the commandment to live in conformity with Christ's

human life on earth (*vivere Jesum Christum*). The symbolism of this *Vision* is that of a mountain. Hadewych sees a very high mountain; five ways lead to its summit. The highest of those ways and the summit of the mountain are one and the same. Hadewych sees the Face of God above the summit. Here all the ways and those who have followed the ways, come together. Hadewych is invited to be the highest of the ways. A voice tells her that this way is the way which Christ has gone. The *Vision* makes clear that the way to God through Christ's humanity is the shortest and most perfect way, which contains all other ways. It is by going this way that we receive Christ in us and can reach the enjoyment of Christ in His divinity.

(i)*Vision IX*. This *Vision* especially deals with the rôle of reason in the mystical life. This rôle is a leading one. Reason, illuminated by the true doctrine of faith, has to lead the soul in its ascension to *Minne*.

Reason – a queen in a golden gown – appears to Hadewych. This queen is preceded by three young women. The first is dressed in a red gown and has two trumpets. The second is dressed in a green gown, with two palms in her hands. The third woman is dressed in black, carrying a lantern, full of days, in her hand. The first woman trumpets that he who does not listen to her Lady will never achieve the highest song of *Minne*. However, taking the other trumpet, she trumpets that he who listens to Lady Reason will be mighty through the power of *Minne*. The second woman is cleaning her Lady's dress from the dust of days and nights using the palms in her hands. Lady Reason approaches Hadewych and asks her if Hadewych knows who she is. Hadewych answers affirmatively and says:

You are the Reason of my soul, your maids are the servants of the house of my soul. Your first maid is holy fear; the second is the power of discernment between you and *Minne*, and the third is Wisdom.

When Hadewych has recognized Lady Reason and her function, she is allowed to reach a higher stage of spiritual life than that of Reason. *Minne* embraces her, Hadewych goes into raptures and stays in this state of mind until a late hour of the day. The meaning of this *Vision* is clear. When Wisdom has taught the soul the power

of Reason, and what Reason may do, guided by *Minne*, then the soul is allowed to reach a higher stage of spiritual life and is permitted the mystical experience of God. It is Wisdom that teaches the soul the archetypal life of all things in God. This kind of knowledge is a *cognitio divinorum*,⁵⁶ which the soul acquires in the mystical experience of God.⁵⁷

(j)*Vision X.* Hadewych describes how she was allowed to enjoy Jesus Christ during half an hour on the day of John the Evangelist.

The soul is made the bride of Christ in this *Vision*.⁵⁸ When the soul has lived in accordance⁵⁹ with Christ's humanity, it may experience Christ in His divinity. Then it becomes not only the bride of Christ, but also His mother, because then it is bearing Christ. Hadewych elucidates the soul's bridal state in apocalyptic language. She sees a beautiful town, new like Jerusalem. This is her conscience according to the Evangelist, who explains things to her. Her soul is the bride, for whose wedding an eagle is inviting the highest spirits among the living and the dead. A voice calls Hadewych the bride.

(k)*Vision XI.* Hadewych sees the *gheheele mogentheit ons Liefs*, "the whole power of our Beloved," as a deep abyss. A lamb, the *Agnus Dei* of the *Revelations*, occupies the abyss. A child is born in the secrecies of the spirits of Love, living in the abyss. Hadewych sees herself in the shape of an eagle in the company of those spirits. St. Augustine is also there in the shape of an eagle. Hadewych and St. Augustine are both swallowed by a phoenix, the symbol of the divine embrace of the three persons of the Trinity (line 67 sq.).⁶⁰

(l)*Vision XII.* The soul, dressed as a bride in a gown of perfect will ornamented by all other virtues,⁶¹ finds its Beloved in a beautiful town. The Beloved is dressed in white and is enthroned on a disc which is revolving in a great abyss. His face gives life and renewal to all who can face Him. The soul, dressed with virtues, achieves the enjoyment of the Bridegroom.

(m)*Vision XIII.* *Minne* is revealed to Hadewych on a Sunday before Pentecost. *Minne* is represented as a mighty queen, enthroned in the face of God.

Hadewych is allowed to see a new heaven, that of the seraphims.

Here the face of God appears, ornamented with wings. Hadewych is lifted by her seraphim so that she sees *Minne* in the face of God. This means that Hadewych is allowed to see what even Mary was not allowed to see during her earthly life, because the presence of her Son was the dearest and highest heaven to Mary. The general meaning of this *Vision* is clear. Now Hadewych has achieved the highest stage of mystical life. On this level the soul spiritually conceives Christ as Mary once did, becoming *Minne's* mother, *Minne* Herself and Christ Himself. St. Augustine already taught "*Deus te Deum vult.*"⁶² This doctrine is in the background when Hadewych says that the soul can become Christ Himself on the highest stage of spiritual life.

(n)*Vision XIV*. Hadewych gives a short description of her '*orewoet*' (*furor aestus*) or burning desire for Love.⁶³ She then explains a throne she had seen in contemplation. The throne is the power, given to her by God, so that she might give Him more satisfaction by leading a virtuous life. Afterwards she sees God, seated on this completely renewed throne in the fullness of His glory. Then it is God who pays homage to Hadewych at the end of this *Vision*, because she has been a brave and strong fighter for the divine Love. Hadewych has had the courage to recognize and experience that Christ is God and man. That is what has made her precious to God. Now it is given to her to experience Christ in His humanity and in His divinity at one and the same time. At the end of the mystical ascent to God, which has been full of struggling and fighting, Hadewych experiences the full and complete Knowledge of Christ. This entire *Vision* is dominated by the concept of the identity of Hadewych with the throne which she is standing before at the beginning of the *Vision*. It is a visionary description of the unification of the soul with Christ in His divinity and in His humanity. Hadewych's identification of *Minne* with Christ becomes very clear in this *Vision*. The same identification is clearly found in the *Strophic Poems* VIII, 12. There, *Minne* is the Son of God, who is hidden in the lap of the Father from all eternity. *Vision XIV* ends with a list of perfect persons. Hadewych may have written this list at the request of her confessor, who may have asked for it in connection with *Vision XIII*, where Hadewych had spoken of such persons.

The *Visions* are very interesting. There is much more to say about

them than we did in this general description. Here we are selecting only the main topics and indicating only the most important subjects. The language is of great beauty. The *Visions* of Hadewych have certainly brought the mediaeval Dutch language to the same level as mediaeval Latin. Hadewych has proved herself to be a great author.

2. *Letters*

Hadewych wrote 31 *Letters*. Most of them are addressed to a young woman, who was a congenial spirit. Some of the *Letters* have no special addressee and are a kind of sermon, for instance, *Ep.* 10 and 20. The subject of the *Letters* is the *Mysticism of Love*. This Mysticism of Love becomes "*Christ-Mysticism*" in the *Letters*. Hadewych identifies Love (*Minne*) with Christ. The service of *Minne* is the service of Christ. In Hadewych's *Letters*, God means Christ in His humanity and in His divinity. We must experience Christ in His Humanity, which implies suffering and death, and in His divinity (*Ep.* 6, 227). This is what we must realize during our life on earth. The readiness to live with Christ in His humanity is the condition for a life with God (*Ep.* 6) and for the experience of God. Christ is the way leading to this goal (*Ep.* 15, 16). This way implies the perfect virtues, faith, hope and love, and the conformity of one's own will to the will of God. A woman who devotes her life to God must keep her eyes directed towards the face of *Minne* in order to read the judgement which *Minne's* face has passed on her (*Ep.* 6, 136; *Ep.* 18, 110). The surrendering of the will to God is a fight, which *Minne's* noble knight must fight (*Ep.* 19, 60). (*So wertsij met Hem al dat selve dat He es*) "So the soul became everything which God Himself is, together with Him." The way through the virtues is also the way through reason (*Ep.* 18, 80). The soul possesses three faculties, *memorie* (conscience and memory),⁶⁵ reason and will. They represent the image of the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. *Memorie* keeps the soul's self-consciousness alive. It feeds the high thought of the soul which can lead the soul to the sublime purposes at which it must aim. Therefore *memorie* has to withdraw itself from the multiplicity of images belonging to the outside world and concentrate itself directly on its lofty purpose. In this process the soul will be helped by its reason, illuminated by the

divine Reason (= the Son); its will will be supported by the divine Will (the Holy Ghost). Illuminated reason is our guide. It teaches us what we must do (*Ep.* 22). Hadewych's *Letters* to the different young women, who devoted their lives to the service of *Minne*,⁶⁶ are exhortations to live this life. The young women must be faithful to God and put their trust in Him and in all He is (*Ep.* 31, 7).

(a) *The 20th Letter.* The 20th Letter⁶⁷ gives a systematic survey of Hadewych's mysticism. Hadewych tells about what really takes many days or even years, in the condensed version of *The twelve hours of Love*. In *Letter 20*⁶⁸ Love comes from God to man and returns to Him in 12 hours. The first three hours are a preparation, containing purifying love, serving love and desire for the service of Love (*Minne*), which is accompanied by suffering. It is in the 4th hour that the soul is taught that it cannot be happy without *Minne*, even if *Minne* claims suffering. The 5th hour is the beginning of the mystical experience. Now the soul is drawn into *Minne* by *Minne*.⁶⁹ The 6th, the 7th, the 8th and the 9th hours are the aspects of *Minne's* beginning victory. Reason is no longer the leading power on this level of the soul's proceedings. The soul now comes to the state of the 'orewoet,' the *furor aestus* (wild burning desire for Love). The 10th hour⁷⁰ is the beginning of *Minne's* complete victory. Now *Minne* has conquered all her enemies. The 11th hour is the hour of the complete unification of the soul with *Minne*. The soul is no longer aware of anything on earth or in heaven and is no longer conscious of itself or of God. It has completely become *Minne*. The 12th hour is the hour in which the mystical withdrawal from the soul's own human activities has been accomplished. Now the soul has become totally like *Minne* in her highest essence. It is working with *Minne* and is resting in her. It withdraws itself into *Minne* when it is enjoying *Minne*; it leaves her when it is working with her. It becomes clear from this *Letter* that visions or corporeal ecstasies do not play an important part in this mysticism here. This throws a special light on Hadewych's *Visions*. They obviously play an additional rôle in her mystical life, but not an essential rôle. They are merely additional phenomena. Hadewych's mysticism knows of one great ecstasy, that is, when the soul passes from the earthly, created love to eternal *Minne*, under her influence which makes the soul ever more like her.

(b) *The 22nd Letter*. *Letter 22* is a sermon, as is *Letter 20*. Hadewych is extensively speculating on the four dimensions in God. God is above all, but nevertheless not elevated. God is beneath all, but in spite of this not suppressed. God is inside all, but in spite of this unsurrounded; God is outside all, but in spite of this He is enclosed. This is what Hadewych tries to elucidate in poetical and allegorical metaphysics: "God is ineffable." Man cannot express the greatness of God in concepts nor can he picture God in a sensual way. Only the soul that is touched by God could elucidate something about God to another understanding soul. Illuminated reason can elucidate something of God's essence to the interior senses, that is to the soul's interior faculties, which are directed towards God. After this introduction Hadewych continues with a description of illuminated reason's teaching on the ineffability of God.

- Ia. God is above all yet remains unelevated, for He does not elevate Himself. God's highness and deepness coincide with God's eternity, which belongs to His essence.
- b. God is not elevated by mankind either. God urges people to be unified with Him in the enjoyment in which He enjoys Himself. This moves people. Some are frightened, others try bravely to reach God in His unelevatedness which eternally transcends them. People pray that God's Kingdom may come into them, claiming to be unified with God again according to the Trinity.

The significance seems to be: man cannot add anything to God by his unification with God. Man cannot elevate God on the one hand, while he is connected with God's profoundness on the other hand.

II. God is beneath all and not suppressed.

- a. God is in Himself, holding up everything; His profoundness and His highness coincide.
- b. People praise Him according to His highest highness which Love is.

III. God is inside all and nevertheless unenclosed.

- a. God is in Himself, in the eternal enjoyment of Himself, and in the Persons of the Trinity, who are turned towards the

oneness of the Divinity. God is in them all in the fullness of His Glory. In them He is enjoying His own rich miracles, together with all, who ever were and will be in their rightful state of glory.⁷¹

- b. However, God is unenclosed, for He has distributed His oneness to other persons and has directed them into four ways. These four ways are the ways in which the “lovers of God” can be unified with God under His leadership.

The first way is the life of those who have become one spirit with God. The second is the way according to the divine nature which has its imprint in the human soul in the three faculties of the soul. The third way is caused by Christ who died for us and gave His life to us in the Holy Communion. The fourth way is caused by the fact that God has waited for us to improve ourselves and to live a holy life.

Hadewych extensively explains the last three ways (IIb, IIIa, b), omitting a discussion of the first way. Those who live according to the second way, live on earth as though they were living in heaven. Those who live according to the third way, live like being in hell, for their reason does not yet understand how they can be unified with the suffering Christ. However, this way also truly leads them as noble knights to the profoundness of God. Those who live according to the fourth way, live as though in purgatory. They have a burning desire for Christ hanging on the cross. God “opens ” their souls and gives the abyss of their souls such width that their burning desires cannot be fulfilled. However, they are quite sure that they will possess God completely and enjoy Him someday in the end. This contrasts with those who live the third way; they are burning with desire without being fed by this certainty. The latter are fed by God’s Love, but they do not live on it. On the contrary, they think that they can never come so far as to be “cut down” with Christ in His mystical body.

All four ways lead into God. God is inside and nevertheless unenclosed, in all these four ways. There is a fifth way, that of the ordinary believers in outward service, whose life is not dominated by Love in the way it is in the case of those of the four abovementioned ways.

IV. God is outside all and nevertheless surrounded.

- a. God pours Himself out by the power and force of His nature. He pours Himself out in the outpouring of His names.⁷² First of all there is the inter-trinitarian flowing of the almighty power of the Father, the Wisdom and strength of the Son and the Light and the outstreaming Goodness of the Holy Ghost.
- b. Second, there is the pouring out of God's Name over the world.
- c. God is surrounded.

Every creature encompasses God completely by that of God which it possesses, for something of God is completely God. The Father⁷³ continuously encompasses Himself together with the essence of every human being, for He continuously urges them to be unified with Him and to rejoice in Him. In this way God encompasses Himself and the essence of every human being. (God encompasses the latter in the Son, because everyone archetypically exists in the Son). Also "those of the four ways" encompass God completely. Most of all God is surrounded by His own glory. The Father encompasses the God-loving spirits with justice in the light of His oneness. He encloses the justice of the Son and of the Holy Ghost in Himself. The God-loving spirits have to satisfy the three Persons of the Trinity. However, justice is especially attributed to the Father before the egress of the Persons. God is completely encompassed in the enjoyment of God of the God-loving spirits.

Hadewych compares the four attributes of God together to a circle. This circle is the Divinity,⁷⁴ represented by four animals, the symbols of the four Evangelists. Each of these symbols is connected with the dimensions in God. The contemplating soul is compared to the eagle and eventually to the four animals, which (*Ezechiel*, I, 12–17) went and returned, went and did not return. Hadewych obviously tried to connect the spiritual and mystical life of the soul with the interior life of the Trinity, in this *Letter*. She expresses her thoughts in metaphors which are not always easily understood by modern readers. However, the meaning of this *Letter* is clear. It deals with the return of the soul to the Trinitarian God. The soul, made in the image of God, has not completely lost the image. It is

“the image” which has to be restored. This means that the soul must be reunified with God. The proper functioning of the mind, which is only possible thanks to the illumination by the eternal Wisdom of God, is an indispensable condition for the soul in order to achieve the purpose at which it aimed. The proper functioning of the mind makes virtue possible, which is a necessary condition for the soul’s unification with God.

Hadewych’s Love-Mysticism is influenced by Augustine’s Platonism. Van Mierlo⁷⁵ suggests that Guillaume de Thierry (*Liber de natura et dignitate amoris*, Migne, *PL*, 184, 393) could have been responsible for the Augustinian influence on Hadewych. This may be partially true. However, Hadewych knew enough Latin (see *Ep.* 26) to read St. Augustine’s writings herself.

(c) *The 9th Letter*. The 9th *Letter* makes clear that Hadewych did not consider the soul’s unification with God in a pantheistic way. The soul does not lose itself in God in such a way that it loses its own essence and being in the unification with God. On the contrary, the soul maintains its own essence in the unification with God. God and the soul are one as far as the enjoyment is concerned. However, they are certainly not one in being. Hadewych obviously follows St. Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa in this. Both Fathers of the Church, in spite of their different metaphysics, rebuked a pantheistic concept of the soul’s unification with God.

(d) *Motive of the Letters*. Most of the *Letters* are exhortations to a congenial spirit to serve *Minne*. The most important concepts in Hadewych’s writings are the important rôle of illuminated reason (*Ep.* 18; *Ep.* 4 and 12) in the service of *Minne*, and the need to live with Christ in His humanity in order to experience Him in His divinity. We have to add little more. It is clear that Hadewych stresses the point that Christ never made use of His almighty power to make His life on earth easier (*Ep.* 6). She also warns her readers that it is not the sweetness of devotion that indicates the right measure of their love, but the good works which are the result of their virtue (*Ep.* 6).⁷⁶ Hadewych’s mystical life is not restricted to contemplation. On the contrary, it is a fight in the service of *Minne*, implying the works of virtue.

3. *Poems*

We want to say a few words about Hadewych's so-called *Strophical Poems*⁷⁷ at the end of this brief discussion of Hadewych's love-mysticism without going into a detailed description of each particular poem. The main topic of Hadewych's *Strophical Poems* is *Minne* and the noble knight's service of *Minne*, who is a noble queen. In the *Strophical Poems* *Minne* is the mutual Love of the three Persons of the Trinity or the divine Love, identified with God or with Christ. Occasionally man's love for God is also called *Minne*. The poet Hadewych urges the servants of *Minne* (as divine Love) to fight for *Minne*. They have to be noble knights, willing to fulfill every beautiful service and to go in search of adventures, ready to conquer *Minne* and to be conquered by *Minne* (*Str. P. II*). Hadewych uses various images to speak about *Minne*. They all refer to the state of mind created by *Minne* in those who love her. *Minne* is compared to a desert or to a sea to cross over. Another image is that of a landscape with mountains, valleys and fields – the mountains standing for consolation, the valleys for grief. *Minne* is said to have a school, where *Minne's* masters are formed and taught her hidden word and incomprehensible Wisdom. *Minne* is an exacting mistress, devouring her lovers, who want to devour her in turn. Life in *Minne's* service is a taking and a giving. *Minne* is sometimes like a raging and raving storm (26, 7, 86), holding her beloved totally in her power. Hadewych proves herself to be a great poet in the *Strophical Poems*. The mediaeval Dutch language is strong and full of beauty, as it is in the so-called *Mengeldichten* ("*Mixed Poems*"), which have the same main topic.

V. CONCLUSION

Hadewych certainly belongs amongst the great authors of Dutch mediaeval literature in the Low Countries. She became a moulder of the Dutch language and made it appropriate for literary and philosophical purposes in a period when Latin still was the favoured language of cultivated people who had literary or philosophical ambitions. In her writings Hadewych proves herself an author of great erudition. She was gifted with a sharp intellectual

mind, but she also had a very strong and passionate character as well. She frankly described her own strong emotional feelings and most personal experiences in her writings, as no other woman in Dutch literature has done prior to the 20th century.⁷⁸ Her work is to be characterized as love-mysticism, as we have made clear above. The strong metaphysical and epistemological content of this love-mysticism, and the aesthetic quality of her language, makes Hadewych one of the great literary women of the Middle Ages.

NOTES

1. See J. Quasten, *Greek Patrology*, Utrecht, Antwerp 1960, Vol. III, *Patrologia*, p. 295.
2. J. van Mierlo in his *Inleiding* (= *Introduction*) tot *Hadewych's Brieven* (= *Letters*), Leuvense Studiën en Tekstuitgaven, Leuven, 1948.
3. See J. Quint, "*Die Überlieferungen der Predigten Eckeharts*", Bonn, 1932.
4. Hugh of St. Victor, *Miscellanea B.V.*, tit. I, in *Patrologia Latina*, 177.
5. Dionysius Aeropagite, *De divinis nominibus* XI, 83, *Patrologia Graeca* III, 607 s.q. English translation by C.R. Rolt, London, 1977.
6. See Van Mierlo in his *Inleiding tot Hadewych's Brieven*, Leuven, 1948.
7. See M. Déchanet, *Aux Sources de la Spiritualité de Guillaume de Thierry*, Bruges, 1940/42.
8. J.H. Kern, *De Limburgse Sermoenen*, Leiden, 1885.
9. See J. van Mierlo *op. cit.*
10. See *M.S. 888-890, fol. 44e*, Royal Library in Brussels, Belgium.
11. For instance θεοειδής = deiformus = Godvormich (= Godlike).
12. See *A.A.S.S. Jun. I*, 827 on the "barbaries" (uncultivatedness) of the Dutch language of the early 12th century.
13. See S. Axters in *Geschiedenis van de Vroomheid in de Nederlanden*, deel II, Antwerp 1953. (History of the Pious Life in the Low Countries).
14. Hugo of St. Victor (in his *Didascalion Eruditio Didascalica*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 176, col. 738-812)) mentions the following artes liberales: grammatica, rhetorica, dialectica, arithmetica, musica, geometria and astronomia. He also adds the physica, the mecanica and the economica, when he wants to set out a school program. See J. Le Goff in *Les Intellectuels au Moyen Age*, Éditions du Gallimard, 1965.
15. See J. Greven, *Die Anfänge der Beghinen*, Münster (Germany), 1912.
16. The etymology of the word beghina or beggina is obscure. See also Webster's *Complete Dictionary of the English Language*, London, 1889, p. 121. Webster connects beggina with the English bag, which is far from certain.
17. See J. Greven, *op. cit.* We read in Jean de Vitry: Impetravi ut liceret mulieribus religiosis non solum in episcopatu Leodiensi, sed tam in regno quam in imperio in eadem domo simul manere et sese invicem mutuis hortationibus ad bonum invitare.

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18. The courts of Bruges, Ghent and Amsterdam are still there.
19. Beatrice of Nazareth spent a year of her life with the beguinae before she became a postulant in the convent of Bloemendaal.
20. There are three manuscripts of her writings in the Royal Library at Brussels, Belgium, to wit M.S. 2879–80 and 2877–78. The language is Middle Dutch.
21. See J. van Mierlo in his introduction to *Inleiding tot Hadewych's Visioenen*, Leuven, 1924–1926.
22. The canons of the Cistercian Order prescribed that laics should receive only bread at Holy Communion, in 1261. Already in 1245 Alexander de Halès said: Bene licet sumere corpus Christi sub unica specie panis tantum, sicut fere ubique fit a laicis in ecclesia (*Tract. de sacr.* q. 4, par. 3). The custom of Communion in bread only seems already to have come into existence in the territory of Brabant during the 12th century according to Van Mierlo in his *Inleiding tot Hadewych's Visioenen*, p. 120.
23. *Soete lieve kint* is a way of addressing a young woman by an elder one.
24. See the list of Perfect Persons at the end of Vision XIV.
25. See J. van Mierlo in his *Inleiding tot Hadewych's Visioenen*, p. 121, note 2. In Cistercian or Benedictine churches the *breviarium monasticum* was recited.
26. M.S. nr. 9373. J. van Mierlo, *Inleiding tot Hadewych's Visioenen*, p. 37 and p. 129.
27. "Song of praise of the blessed Hadewych of Antwerp. So she is called in the catalogue of the manuscripts of various libraries in Belgium about the year 1487."
28. See G.P.M. Knuvelde, *Beknopt handboek tot de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Letterkunde* (= *Dutch Literature*), Den Bosch, 1962.
29. D. de Rougemont, *L'amour en Occident*, Paris, 1939.
30. Lancelot "sins" against the *cortezia* in betraying this mystical and sublime love. The British epic novels differ from French epic poetry in replacing the sublime mystical love by that love which also implies the physical possession of the beloved woman. Compare also Tristan and Isolde. See also F.E. Gruyer, *Chrétien de Troyes, inventor of the modern novel*, New York, 1957.
31. See for instance: *Strophische Gedichten*, 8, 12. See note 77 for the name.
32. The Dutch word *Minne* is of the feminine gender in the Dutch language. *Minne* is a "she" and not a "he", or an "it," as would be the case in English. However, this does not prevent Hadewych from an identification of Jesus Christ and *Minne* in some passages.
33. See for instance Augustine *De immortalitate animae* ch. I (on the immortality of the soul), ch. I (Edition Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges, Belgium 1950).
34. See Augustine *De libero arbitrio* (On free will), II, 12, 44 (Edition Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges, Belgium 1952).
35. See for instance also *Ep.* 22, 107 (This letter had some influence on Ruusbroec in *Die Twelwe Beghinen*, ch. 219–220).
36. Platonic Ideas are metaphysical entities. The visible world is merely an image of a higher world, that of the Ideas, in Plato's opinion at the end of his *Timaeus*.

37. *De quaestionibus* 83 (Edition Declée de Brouwer, Bruges, Belgium 1951).
38. *Quod factum est, in ipso vita erat*. In the mind of God are all created things more real than in themselves. For they have an uncreated life in God, but a created life in themselves (Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* I, 9, 18 a 4, ad 3 m).
39. The concept of rejoicing in God is very Augustinian. The thought of “*frui Deo*” is found in St. Augustine’s writings and also in those of Gregory of Nyssa and in those of William of Thierry, see note 40.
40. The influence of the Augustinian “*frui Deo*” might have been through William of Thierry (*De natura et dignitate amoris*, P.L. 184, col. 406). William stresses the fact that God also rejoices Himself in man, which is also said by Hadewych (*Ep.* 18). William himself was strongly influenced by Gregory of Nyssa. See M. Déchanet *Aux Sources de la Spiritualité de Guillaume de Thierry*, Bruges 1940/42.
41. *Tria haec potissimum considerata tractemus, memoriam, intelligentiam, voluntatem* (*De Trin.* X, 11, 14). See also X, 11, 18. *Memoria* has a special meaning in St. Augustine’s writings. It is the faculty of the eternal soul by which it can remember the objects of sense-perception in the past. In this case, it is of no importance, whether the object of this perception exists or not. *Memoria* can also refer to the eternal *Ideas* which are contemplated by the human mind. In this case there can be *memoria* without sense-perception. See *Ep.* VII; *Conf.* X, 12, 19; *De imm. an.* III, 3. See my edition of Augustine, *De immortalitate animae*, Amsterdam 1977.
42. Hugh of St. Victor (*Miscellanea* V, tit. 1) also attends this Augustinian doctrine.
43. Van Mierlo assumes a strong influence of William of Thierry in this letter, especially lines 80–129.
44. This metaphor is also found in Richard of St. Victor. Gregory of Nyssa already speaks of the senses of the soul, in *De virginitate* (Edition Sources Chrétiennes no. 119, Lyon, France, 1966).
45. Compare St. Augustine, *Inquietum cor nostrum in nobis, donec requiescat in te, Confessiones*; in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, édition Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges 1962. Dionysius Areopagite *De divinis nominibus* IV, 11,17; IV, 14, 18. *Patrologia Graeca* III, 607 sq.
46. See also *Ep.* 12: Reason, illuminated by Truth has to elucidate the true service of Love to us.
47. It is the eternal Truth (Christ) that makes the soul’s reasoning silent, when the soul has come so far as to meet Truth by this reasoning. From now on the soul is beyond the level of reasoning and is overwhelmed by the divine Love (*Stroph. Poems* 30).
48. For the task of reason see *Ep.* 12; *Ep.* 18; *Ep.* 4 and *Ep.* 11; *Vis.* I (the fourth tree); *Vis.* 8 and 9; *Vis.* 12.
49. *Vis.* I, 291.
50. The influence of William of Thierry is unmistakable in this respect. Compare his *Ep. ad fratres de monte Dei* (= *Letter to the brothers of the mountain of God*), *Patrologia Latina*, 184, 343.

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51. The soul fears that it does not praise God sufficiently by the virtues and that people do not glorify God sufficiently. It also fears that it will have to suffer and die with Christ.
52. Cf. *Vis.* V, 64.
53. The allegory of the orchard was already known in the history of Felicitas and Perpetua. It found its way in the history of mysticism in the 13th and 14th century, even in Germany. See W. Preger in *Geschichte der Deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter*, Aachen 1962, III, 48–53.
54. *Vis.* III, 1. 2: *ende nam mi in den gheeste . . . Compare Apoc. (Revelations) 17, 3: abstulit me in spiritu.* See also *Apoc.* I, 10: *fui in spiritu in die dominica.* *Apoc.* 21, 10 *sustulit me in spiritu.* Also the description of Minne in *Vision* 13, 1. 83: *Der Minnen voeren uten oghen swerde al vol vierigher vlammen*, (“From the eyes of Love there were swords coming out, all full of fiery flame”), strongly reminds us of *Apoc. (Revelations)* I, 14: *in dextera sua stellas septem et de ore gladius utraque parte acutus.* See J. van Mierlo in his *Inleiding tot de Visioenen van Hadewych* for the influence of the *Revelations* on Hadewych.
55. (. . . beyond all understanding of all that can be known).
56. See also *Ep.* 13 in connection with this *Vision*.
57. This concept of Wisdom is also found in St. Augustine.
58. The topic of the spiritual wedding is found later in Ruusbroec.
59. The Dutch language says things in a stronger way, as in Latin: *vivere Christum.*
60. “The phoenix which swallowed the eagle, that was the oneness in which the Trinity lives.”
61. These virtues are Belief, Hope, Faithfulness, Love, Desire, the Faculty of discernment, Mighty and Good works, Reason, Wisdom, Peace, Patience.
62. God wishes you to be God.
63. In German: *Geisteswut.*
64. “Om Gode met Gode te leven moet men eerst mensche met siere menschheit willen leven” (*Ep.* 6): “In order to experience God with God (*Vivre Dieu avec Dieu*) one must first of all have the will to live as a human being in accordance with God’s (Christ’s) humanity.”
65. See our Introduction.
66. Probably “*beghinae.*” See our Introduction and further *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, M.G.H.S.S. 28, 74 sq. and 234 sq.
67. Letter 20 is comparable to “*The Seven Modes of Sacred Love*” of Beatrice of Nazareth.
68. The motive of cyclic love is found also in Dionysius Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus* IV, 11, 17, and IV, 14, 8, *Patrologia Graeca* III, 607 sq.
69. This state of mind is the state of mind in which Hadewych begins writing her 17th *Letter*.
70. The 10th hour is comparable to Ruusbroec’s description in *Seven Trappen* (*Seven Stages*), C. XIV, p. 267.
71. Exemplarism. See Introduction.
72. The name indicates the essence of a thing according to some mediaeval

- philosophers.
73. Here, Father means the Divinity before the egress of the Persons.
 74. The circle is also used by Nicolas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* I, ch. XI–XXI (Paul Wilpert, ed. Nikolaus von Kues, *Werke*, Berlin, 1967) to express the Divinity.
 75. J. van Mierlo is his *Inleiding tot de Brieven van Hadewych*, Leuven, 1948, suggests that William of Thierry (*Liber de Natura et Dignitate Amoris*, Migne *Patrologia Latina* 184, 393) could have been responsible for the Augustinian influence on Hadewych. This may be partially true. However, Hadewych knew enough Latin to read St. Augustine's writings herself. *Ep.* 26 provides good evidence of this.
 76. We find the same thought in Richard of St. Victor *De praeparatione animi ad contemplationem* (= *Benjamin Minor*), *Patrologia Latina* 196, col. 1–63 passim; *De gratia contemplationis* (= *Benjamin Major*), *Patrologia Latina* 196, col. 63–192 passim; *Tractatus de gradibus caritatis*, *Patrologia Latina* 196, col. 1195–1207. See further Hadewych in *Ep.* X. See J. van Mierlo in his *Inleiding tot Hadewych's Brieven*, Leuven, 1948.
 77. The name *Strophische Gedichten* (*Strophical Poems*) is given to them by the later editors of Hadewych's writings.
 78. In the twentieth century women poets like Hélène Swarth (1859–1941) and Henriëtte Roland Holst (1869–1952) expressed their own emotional feelings and experiences in their poems. See G.P.M. Knuvelde, *Handboek tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Letterkunde*, vol. 4, 5 Den Bosch 1976, p. 239; p. 297–305.

8. Birgitta of Sweden

CORNELIA WOLFSKEEL

I. BIOGRAPHY

Birgitta (or Brigida) Suecica was born in 1302, in Finstad near Upsala in Sweden, the daughter of Birgerus and his wife, Ingeborg,¹ both of noble birth. Most of what we know of Birgitta's early childhood is surrounded by pious legends. Ingeborg gave birth to her daughter Birgitta shortly after she had been saved from a very dangerous shipwreck which had caused the deaths of many other people. An angel dressed in bright clothes came to Ingeborg at night in a vision, telling her that she would give birth to a daughter who would be very dear to God, and that this was the reason she had been rescued. She was told that she should take good care of this great gift of God.

The priest of a church in the neighborhood had a vision with a similar message. The Holy Virgin Mary, seated on a brilliant cloud, came to this priest, when he was praying at night, and said to him: "To Birgerus is born a daughter, whose voice will be heard over all the world in a miraculous way." Birgitta grew up a very pious and religious young girl, who very much wanted to live the life of a nun. In spite of this very clear inclination towards monastic life, however, Birgitta was forced by her parents to marry Olaf (Ulphon), a nobleman of reputed standing. She was only 13 years old then and her husband only 18. The couple had 8 children. After a pilgrimage in 1341 to Santiago de Compostella, to the grave of St. James they decided to live in continence. Olaf even joined the Cistercian order in the monastery of Alvastra, but shortly after that (in 1344) he died.

Following Olaf's death Birgitta prepared herself for a journey to

Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Before she left Sweden, she stayed for some time with the monks of Alvastra. In 1346 she was given Wadstena (Vadstena) by the Swedish king Eriksson. Wadstena was intended to serve as the foundation of a convent of the religious order to be founded by Birgitta. It was 1349 before Birgitta left Sweden for Rome. Here she was told by Christ in a vision to wait for another vision before sailing for the Holy Land (*Rev. Cael.* liber VIII . . .). It was not until 1372 that Birgitta actually went to the Holy Land. In 1373 she was back in Rome, where she died on July 23 in the presence of her son, Birgerus, and her daughter, Catherina, the only two of her 8 children who were still alive. Birgitta's body was transferred in 1374 to Wadstena in Sweden. Pope Bonafatius IX canonized her in 1391.

1. *Asceticism*

Birgitta's life is characterized by a very strong asceticism. Born to a noble family, she disposed of her great riches, not to make her own life easier or more pleasant, but, for the well-being of the poor, whom she very much cared for. She always tried to alleviate the needs of the poor and miserable. She became the founder of many "hospitalia" (hospitals) in Sweden. On many occasions, Birgitta nursed the sick herself. There was no humble job in nursing the sick that Birgitta considered beneath her dignity. She always was full of love for the poor and the outcasts of this earth, ready to help them from her own means. She made Wadstena a place where 60 nuns and 25 monks of the order of St. Augustine, (officially called that of the Holy Saviour) could live in accordance with the rules which were laid down by herself and officially approved in 1370 by the Pope.

Birgitta's asceticism also had exaggerated features. She scarcely took enough food to keep up her strength. She also used to inflict burns to her body by burning candles as a way of torturing herself. She had too strong an inclination to abstinence and doing penance, an inclination which possessed her with a desire to kill the flesh and its demands. In spite of this exaggerated asceticism, she lived to the age of 71. Birgitta's asceticism is undoubtedly influenced by that of St. Francis of Assisi. In a vision, St. Francis himself invited Birgitta

to his "chamber of obedience," where he instructed her in obedience and poverty (*Rev. Cael. VII, 3*): The drawing of the neighbours to God should be her food, the pleasure of seeing them converted to God should be her drink. In chapter 20 of the *Revelationes Caelestes* liber VII, Christ revealed the value of the Franciscan order to Birgitta for the sake of a Franciscan brother who had consulted her in spiritual matters. Birgitta was informed that the rule of St. Francis was inspired by the spirit of God. Birgitta had a special devotion for the Virgin Mary, who often appeared to her in a vision. In her Mariology she undoubtedly is ahead of her time, as we shall make clear below.

2. Political Activity

Like Catherine of Siena, Birgitta did not hesitate to give her critical advice to the powerful and mighty of the world, including the Queen of Cyprus and the Prince of Antiochia. (*Rev. Cael. VII, ch. 18*) Christ appeared to her in a vision, criticizing the kings and princes who did not want to go on a crusade to the Holy Land, where He had suffered and died (*Rev. Cael. VII, ch. 16*). According to this vision, which Birgitta wrote down, the monarchs of Naples would be condemned by Christ because their illicit marriages were contracted in contradiction to the doctrine of the Church (*Rev. Cael. VII, ch. 4*). Birgitta reminds us of Catherine of Siena in her criticism of the luxurious way of life of the clergy. (*Rev. Cael. VII, ch. 7*) The Virgin Mary appeared to her in a vision, criticizing clergymen because of their sinful way of life, while stressing the validity of their sacerdotal actions, whatsoever their sins might be.

Birgitta was prepared for her later political role during the years 1335–1341, when she and her husband stayed at the court of King Magnus and his wife Blanche of Namur in Stockholm. Birgitta was not afraid to mingle in the international political affairs of King Magnus. She had a very strong sense of justice and a great concern for the poor. So, for instance, at a time when the King needed money very badly, because he owed money to his creditors for the estate of Skåne and that of Blekinge,² she advised him not to increase the burden of taxes for the people of Sweden. On this occasion she even offered her two oldest sons, Karl and Bengt, as

hostages until the King paid his debts. She considered increasing taxes not only an offense against the Swedish people, but an offense against God (*Rev. Cael.* introduction to the 8th book).³

Following the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, Birgitta's political interest extended to Europe and especially to the political role of the papacy in Europe. In 1349 she wrote to Pope Clemens VI in Avignon, asking that he end the war between England and France, and return to Rome, announce 1350 as a jubilee year, and begin reforming the Church into what, in Birgitta's view, it ought to be: a spiritual community (*Rev. Cael.* VI, 63). The Pope did not listen to the advice that Birgitta said God had instructed her to give. He merely announced 1350 as jubilee year. From this time on Birgitta considered it her God-given duty to occupy herself with politics. In obedience to God, she followed the divine instructions given her in a revelation, to go to Rome, in the autumn of 1349 (*Rev. Extravagantes* 41 and 8). She obeyed the divine orders to speak to high-placed persons and political leaders regarding the ethical aspects of their political leadership, in the years to come.

During her stay in Rome, Birgitta had close contacts with Pope Urbanus V through the intermediary of Nicolò d'Orsini, the papal estate-holder in the Umbrian town, Perugia. She told the Pope many of the revelations she had had, wanting to influence him politically, and to prevent him from returning to Avignon. The Pope, however, could not resist the cardinals, who feared Birgitta's influence. So Birgitta was not successful in her efforts to influence Urbanus V. Also, her efforts for internal reform of the Church, which was morally corrupt, were not very successful, for Pope Urbanus V was not politically strong enough to take the right measures, this in spite of his good will and wish for moral reform of the Church, with which he returned to Rome in 1367. For almost 20 years, Birgitta had hoped and worked for peace between the German emperor, Charles IV (Karl IV), and Pope Urbanus V. In 1368, during a meeting with the Emperor in Rome, Birgitta told him of her revelation concerning his personal moral life, as well as of her hopes for peace between him and the Pope. While she was not successful in inducing him regarding the former, she *was* successful regarding the latter; Urbanus and Charles made peace that year.

European politics in which papacy was involved generally evolved after 1368 in a way that was totally in contradiction to Birgitta's

insight and wishes. From that time on, her political role would be that of a prophet, a warning messenger to the Pope and all others involved in European politics. Birgitta had once unsuccessfully tried to prevent King Magnus from starting a war against Russia.

Her stay in Rome did not keep her from following the political events in faraway Sweden. Having foreseen the moral decline of Sweden and King Magnus (*Rev. Cael.* VIII, 31) long ago, she did not hesitate to give her warning to the Swedish King and all others involved. As Adalsten⁴ rightly puts it, Birgitta wanted “to unify the law of God’s commandments and the form of social and political life.”

3. *Education*

Birgitta’s education as a lady of noble birth, her natural frankness and intellectual capacities, must have been a great help to her in accomplishing what she considered to be her political duty. She was well enough educated to speak frankly to the Pope, the Kings, and the gentry of Europe. Birgitta certainly was intellectually gifted and liked to study. Nils Hermani (Nicolaus Hermansson), the tutor of her sons Karl and Birger, taught her Latin. Master Matthias, later the Archbishop of Linköping, made her familiar with the problems of theological doctrine. She was as devoted to intellectual study as she was to living a life of poverty. According to the rule revealed to her by Christ (*Rev. Cael.* IV, 37), utmost poverty is required. However, those who take the vow of poverty are allowed to have as many books as they want to have for their studies, since continuing study is also part of the rule.⁵ We have already noted that Birgitta’s asceticism was related to that of St. Francis. Birgitta diverges from St. Francis’ rule of poverty where intellectual studies were concerned. She considered intellectual activity and study a way to achieve better self-knowledge and knowledge of God. On the other hand, she warned against misuse of man’s intellectual capacities, for she was convinced that God did not care for learning and erudition, unless it was accompanied by a good moral life (*Rev. Cael.* V, liber quaestionum). Birgitta’s writings prove that she herself was a woman of high morality and great erudition and learning. They also show her as a visionary person, who had her

first vision of Mary at the age of seven, and a visionary experience of Christ's Passion at fourteen.

II. BIRGITTA'S WRITINGS

1. *Revelationes*

The *Revelationes* (= *Revelations*)⁶ are reported to be messages from Christ to the world. Petrus of Alvastra, who became Birgitta's secretary, wrote them down and has translated them from Swedish into Latin, and included additional explanations. During her last years in Rome, Birgitta wanted to improve Petrus' rather barbarian Latin. Therefore she gave the Latin translation of her *Revelationes* to Alfonso of Jaen for improvement of the Latin. The latter corrected the language and divided the *Revelationes* into 8 books, whereas Petrus of Alvastra also added the book of the *Revelationes Extravagantes*. The *Revelationes Extravagantes* were originally not connected with the *Revelationes Caelestes*. They were not, like the *Revelationes Caelestes*, examined by prominent clergymen like Master Mattias and Alfonso. Their authenticity and credibility were defended only by Petrus and the later St. Catherine, Birgitta's daughter. After the death of Birgitta all her *Revelationes* were examined, first on authority of Pope Gregory XI, and later on that of Pope Urbanus VI, who initiated her canonization (in which her daughter Catherine was also instrumental). The council of Basel also doubted the credibility of Birgitta's *Revelationes*. Cardinal Torquemada, who was charged with the examination at that time, however, declared them to be revelations given to a very pious woman. In his defense speech, Torquemada compared Birgitta to Judith in the Old Testament.⁷

Birgitta's revelations represent a reality that is revealed to her in a special way, but since she is the receiver, they have to do with her psychological and physical capacities as well. This becomes clear from *Rev. Cael.* II, 8, where Christ speaks to Birgitta in the following way:

The vision you see, does not appear to you as it really is. For your body would not be able to endure the appearance when you would see the spiritual beauty of the Angels and the souls of the

Saints. In that case your body as the corrupt and fragile vase it is, would burst because of the soul's joy about the vision . . .

The visions were not given to Birgitta merely for her own sake. On the contrary, in the capacity of the receiver of the visions Birgitta had a task to fulfill. Through her, Christ wanted to speak to the world for the instruction and salvation of mankind (*Rev. Cael.* II, ch. 15). This was exactly what Birgitta had requested when she asked Christ to speak again to the world and to warn people (*Rev. Cael.* IV, ch. 37). Birgitta's mysticism is strongly connected with the prophetic message she had to proclaim to the world. The political role she played in European politics is unthinkable without this mysticism characterized by its ethical and prophetic impact. Alfonso Torquemada says, in his introduction to the eighth book of the *Revelationes Caelestes*, that Birgitta's visions can be divided into corporeal (sensual), spiritual⁸ (imaginary) and intellectual visions. The vision, in 1314, of Christ crucified (*Vita Brigidae*) is to be considered a spiritual vision, whereas the vision of Mary, when Birgitta is in labour at the birth of her daughter Cecilia, is to be considered a sensual vision. The visions of the *liber quaestionum* (*Rev. Cael.* V) however, clearly are intellectual visions.⁹ The same holds for the inspiration of the rule (*Rev. Cael.* IV, 37 and VII, 51). The *Revelationes* clearly show Birgitta as a woman of great erudition. The same holds for the *Orationes* (Prayers) and the *Sermo Angelicus*.

2. *Sermo Angelicus*

The *Sermo Angelicus* exists in 21 parts, to wit, three groups of long lectures for each day of the week. An angel instructs Birgitta on the merits of the Virgin Mary and her position in theology. Like the *Revelationes*, the *Sermo Angelicus* shows that Birgitta had a good knowledge of theological doctrines. For example the doctrine of exemplarism¹⁰ was well known to her (*Sermo*, I, lectio prima). (See section III below.) Birgitta knows the Holy Scripture very well. She often refers to the Old and the New Testaments. In the first three lectures the Angel reveals how God has loved Mary from eternity above all creatures.

The second group of three lectures deals with the fall of Lucifer

and Mary's creation. After the fall of Lucifer, the angels knew that the creation of Mary was necessary. They rejoiced in her creation, for they understood that God loved her above all. After the creation of the world, Mary was apparently standing before God and the angels. When Mary was still uncreated, standing before God, the angels were well aware of the special position that she would have in this visible world. They knew the great things God was going to establish through Mary. Therefore they did not grieve about the fall of man, having seen the divine vision of Mary standing before God.

The third group of three lectures deals with Adam and the fall of man. The angel speaks of Adam's repentance after the fall, stressing the point that Adam in this fallen state found consolation in the knowledge of the future creation of Mary and her great humility and dignity. The future birth of the dignified mother of God was a consolation to the patriarchs and all the prophets, according to the angel.

The fourth group of three lectures concerns Mary's (immaculate) conception and her nativity. The angel tells Birgitta, how God, who loved Mary before He created her, also loved her when she was in the womb of her mother.

The fifth group of three lectures relates the story of Mary's life as a young girl. Mary was beautiful in soul and in body in the eyes of all, who saw her. She was not inclined to any sin. She became the mother of Christ, but stayed a sinless virgin *ante et post partum*.

The sixth group of three lectures deals with Mary's sorrow and suffering at the death of Christ and her spiritual constancy and patience in suffering. The angel explains to Birgitta that Mary, knowing the scripture, knew why Christ must suffer. The knowledge that He must suffer for the salvation of mankind was a great comfort to Mary, according to the angel. In spite of this, she nearly suffered to death at the Passion of Christ. However, as soon as Christ was laid down in the tomb, Mary's worries were over, for she knew that Christ would rise from death to eternal glory.

The seventh group of three lectures depicts Mary's faith. The Angel tells how she had no doubts about Christ's resurrection, although the others were full of doubt. Her life and doctrine were an example for the others around her. She was elevated into heaven with body and soul after her death because of her great merits.

This brief summary of the contents of the *Sermo Angelicus* does

not give a complete survey of the many theological questions it raises. Since it is impossible to deal with all Birgitta's writings at length within the confines of this chapter, we shall discuss the theological and philosophical concepts of the *Sermo* together with those of her other writings in part III, below. Even from this very short summary it will be clear that Birgitta dealt with many theological questions. She even seems to have been ahead of the development of dogma in her time.

3. *The Orationes*

According to what Birgitta tells us in the seventh book of the *Revelationes Caelestes*, ch. 13, the *Orationes* were given to her at her request, when she was spiritually elevated. The *Orationes* deal with the life of Mary, whose assumption into heaven and immaculate conception are among the theological concepts that Birgitta strongly emphasized. Her interest in the Passion of Christ and her strong devotion to the Virgin Mary may have at least some connection with the above-mentioned vision of Mary and with the experience of Christ Birgitta had as a young girl. These juvenile experiences may have given her a certain disposition to receive other spiritual experiences of Christ and of Mary. The *Orationes* prove that she dared to assert a strong position in the theological discussion of her day regarding the Virgin Mary. That discussion dealt with the question of Mary's role in Christ's salvation of mankind through His Passion. The *Orationes* are to be divided into two main groups:

- I. *The Orationes revealed by God to Birgitta on request of the Holy Virgin*
- II. *The 15 pious Orationes of the Passion of Christ.*

(a) *ad I.* These *Orationes* are four in number. The first deals with the praise of Mary, her immaculate conception and assumption into heaven. The second *Oratio* deals with Christ, His humanity, death, and assumption. The third *Oratio* also deals with Christ, and with His holy body and activities on earth in particular. The fourth *Oratio* deals with Mary's pure and immaculate body and with all her virtuous activities.

(b) *ad II*. These 15 *Orationes* were prayed by Birgitta daily for 30 years. They deal with Christ's Passion. Birgitta asks Christ to have mercy upon her soul in every prayer, after she has reminded Him of His Passion.

III. BIRGITTA'S DOCTRINE

Several closely related concepts inform Birgitta's doctrine: her Mariology, her concepts of a Trinitarian God, her concept of human nature, and her view of political authority. Birgitta not only had a special devotion for Christ's mother, Mary, she also had very outspoken ideas about the Holy Virgin in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. Before examining her Mariology, we have to make a few preliminary remarks on the development of Mariology in general.

1. *Historical Background of Birgitta's Mariology*

Since the Council of Ephesus in 431, Mary was officially recognized as *theotokos* (*deipara*), God-bearer or the mother of God. The members of the Council had explicitly stressed Mary's virginity *ante et post partum*, for in their view, the mother of God had to be a forever-sinless virgin. Since virginity was considered a better state of life than marriage, in particular Mary's virginity is highly praised. It is part of the moral perfection of the mother of God. The development of Mariology is linked with the development of theology, especially that of Christology. The more the focus of theology is on the incarnation of Christ, the more it is on Christ's mother, the *deipara*. Until the second Council of Nicea (680–681) Mariology was closely linked with Christology. After this Council, the development of Mariology would more and more lead a life of its own. It certainly is not completely separated from Christology, but it has a much greater anthropological impact than it had before. From then on the focus of Mariology was on the holy person of Mary. This development had for centuries been reflected in the pious beliefs of ordinary people. In the West it leads up to the discussion on Mary's assumption and immaculate conception in the Middle Ages.

The Fathers had already stressed Mary's ethical qualities and her spiritual motherhood; piety among laics and preaching clerics stimulated the extension of Mary's qualities before a doctrinal foundation was given. Mary was honoured as queen of heaven in the eighth century by Ambrose Autpert.¹¹ Anselm (1109) and Eadmer (1124) followed his footsteps in this matter, the latter even calling Mary an empress. Mary is considered *regina coeli* in many sermons of the Middle Ages. Many mediaeval authors followed St. Augustine's concept in *De virginitate* ch. 6, in describing Mary as *typus ecclesiae*. In this context we must also mention Durandus of Mende (1296).¹² Mary was honoured as mother of the church by Berengaudus (9th century),¹³ who based himself on *Revelations (Apocalypse)* 12. Many mediaeval authors considered her the spiritual mother of all Christians. The prayers of the Carolingian period make clear that Mary was worshipped as the mother of all mercy, who could intercede with Christ for the sake of her worshippers. Already in the *Psalter* of the Church of St. Peter in Beauvais Mary bears this name.¹⁴ In general, there is a strong tendency for worship of Mary throughout the mediaeval period. Many of her worshippers wanted to be her servants, following the example of the service of the knights to their ladies. The hymn "Ave Maria, stella maris" composed in the 9th century, is a very good example of the place Mary had in the poetry of the people. The commentary on it by Walafried Strabo¹⁵ shows his theological approval and involvement: "Mary is the star of the sea for us who are on the sea of this world; however Christ is the light for us to follow."

The assumption of Mary, already present in the Byzantine tradition of the sixth century, was defended in the West by an unknown author in the Carolingian period. The writing is called *De assumptione beatae virginis* (*On the assumption of the blessed virgin*) and was unjustly ascribed to Augustine during the Middle Ages. The author tried to give theological grounds for the widespread belief in Mary's assumption. He argued that Mary, being the mother of God, had been given grace above all others. In his opinion, it was impossible that she should have received less than others at death. If God had saved Daniel from the lions, He certainly could not have done less for Mary. The anonymous author thinks it appropriate and in accordance with Christian doctrine to believe that Mary was elevated into heaven in body and in soul. Another writing, *De assumptione beatae virginis*, dating from the same period, written by

Paschasius Radbertus, but wrongly ascribed to Jerome during the Middle Ages, speaks of Mary's corporeal assumption as a possibility to be considered in holy desire, but which can not be known for sure. This writing of Ps. Jerome¹⁶ was directed to the nuns of Soissons in France, who had asked for information in respect to the assumption feast of the 15th of August. The belief in Mary's assumption already existed for many centuries among pious believers, long before the great theologians of the 13th century occupied themselves with the doctrinal aspects of the matter. Many theologians, such as Alcuin at the court of Charlemagne, favoured the same ideas on Mary in this respect as the common laics did. A.M. Landgraf¹⁷ has collected many texts by 12th century theologians, who took Mary's corporeal assumption to be an indisputable fact. In the 13th century Thomas Aquinas¹⁸ (in *Summa Theologiae*) agreed with the testimony of the *Legenda Aurea*, that Mary was elevated into heaven, assumed whole, in body and soul. Thomas said that the Church adhered to this doctrine as to one of its most sacred beliefs. However, the corporeal assumption was not generally accepted until the second half of the 13th century. Pope Innocentius IV still considered it a liberal conception.¹⁹

The "conceptio immaculata" was a much more difficult item in the Middle Ages. Since the Councils of Chalcedon and Ephesus the Eastern and Western churches considered Mary to be mother of God, *semper virgo* and free of all personal sins. In the East, even earlier than in the West, Mary's sanctification, or, at least her purification was part of the general beliefs of Christianity. These doctrines had their roots in the ethical picture of Mary, favoured by the Fathers during the patristic period.²⁰ Among the Fathers, Gregory of Nazianzus had already considered Mary free of original sin at the annunciation. The popes favoured this concept. In the West, in the 9th century, Paschasius Radbertus declared Mary to have always been free from original sin²¹ going further than Gregory of Nazianzus. This led to a long and rather complicated discussion in later centuries. This discussion was nourished by the beliefs of ordinary people. In England, Anselm and Eadmer made their contributions to the development of this discussion. Anselm²² taught that Mary, whom he considered "*redemptrix, salvatrix and reconciliatrix*," had to be free of all sins by the fact of reconciliation of Christ, which in his opinion also extended to people who lived before Christ was born. Eadmer was of a similar view.²³

In the 13th century Duns Scotus followed their footsteps in this matter and even went a little further. In the *Ordinatio*²⁴ Duns Scotus dealt with the question of Mary and original sin. In his opinion, theoretically there are three possibilities:

1. Mary always was free of original sin.
2. Mary was subject to original sin, but only for a very short time. Then she was set free from original sin.
3. Mary was set free from original sin after some time.

Duns Scotus personally favoured the first possibility, since he considered it most in accordance with the dignity of the Holy Virgin. Scotus certainly was a defender of the *praeredemptio* and of the *praeservatio* of Mary. The great Scholastics in the preceding century had not accepted the *praeredemptio*, although at least Thomas Aquinas and Albert Magnus had spoken in favour of the *praeservatio*. Both Thomas²⁵ and Albert²⁶ defended Mary's *sanctificatio in utero*. This means that in their view Mary was sanctified and set free from original sin in the womb of her mother after a rational soul was given to her body (*post animationem*). After that, in their opinion, Mary was preserved from sinning by the grace of God.

In spite of their sincere admiration for Mary, Albert and Thomas thought it appropriate to temper an exaggerated worship of Mary, which was developing more and more in their period. After Duns Scotus had defended the concept of Mary's immaculate conception at the beginning of the 14th century, the theological discussion on Mary continued. At the Council of Basel in 1431 the immaculate conception was confirmed by the participants. However, the discussion on this matter continued during the centuries to come. It was not until 1854 that the immaculate conception became an official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Birgitta's Doctrine on Mary

The *Sermo Angelicus de excellentia beatae virginis Mariae* deals with Mary's place in God's salvation of mankind. However, Birgitta teaches us a lot about Mary in her other writings as well. Limitations of space make it impossible to discuss all the writings in which she speaks about Mary in detail. Nevertheless, a few remarks on her Mariology can be extracted from Birgitta's various works.

Mary is called “regina coeli” (*Rev. Cael VII*, 28; *Rev. Cael. III*, ch. 17).²⁷ Birgitta considers her to be elevated above all angels and all demons, above heaven and earth and above everything created (*Rev. Cael. VII*, ch. 13). Mary is the queen of the Angels (*Sermo Angelicus* feria II, lectio I), (the Star of the Sea) Stella Maris (*Sermo* feria IV, lectio II), queen of heaven (*Rev. Cael.* 8 41). Birgitta even calls her salvatrix (*Rev. Extrav. III*, 5).²⁸ In the seventh book of the *Revelationes Caelestes*, the Holy Virgin tells Birgitta how she was corporeally elevated into heaven after having been in the grave for 15 days. According to Birgitta in *Rev. Cael. VI*, 49; *Sermo* feria IV, lectio I–III, Mary was set free from original sin. The *Sermo* mentions Mary as the magistra of the Apostles, who comforts the martyrs, teaches the believers, gives an excellent example to the virgins, gives consolation to the widows, proves herself to be a very sound counselor of married people, and by fortifying their strength, helps all those who adhere to the Catholic faith. (*Sermo*, feria IV, lectio I). After Christ had made His ascension into heaven, Mary had to stay on earth for the instruction and comfort of others, according to the *Sermo*. In *De passione Jesu Christi et gloria beatae virginis Mariae eius matris*,²⁹ ch. 25, Mary tells how an angel revealed to her her future death, funeral and assumption into heaven by the angels after a stay of 15 days in the grave. In the next chapter Mary’s coronation as Queen of the Angels is described. Birgitta is given a heavenly vision of this event. She sees Mary dressed in a blue gown which resembles the colour of heaven. Mary is bearing a crown, her beautiful long hair spread over her shoulders. Birgitta is stupefied by this beautiful vision. Then St. John the Baptist arrives to explain this vision to her. The crown means that Mary is queen, and mistress and mother of the King of the Angels. Her long hair signifies that she is a virgin of the greatest and most immaculate purity; her gown with the colour of heaven means that all temporal things are dead to her. The gold coloured undergown signifies that she is burning with divine love and charity.

In her crown, her Son had placed seven lilies and between them He had also placed seven stones of great value. The 7 lilies have a symbolic meaning: humility, fear, obedience, patience, constancy, meakness, and, mercy in extremely difficult circumstances. The seven stones also have a symbolic meaning, the first stone symbolizes Mary’s great virtue, surpassing all other virtues. The second

stone symbolizes her utmost purity, the third her excellent beauty, the fourth stone, which is of very great value, is the symbol of her wisdom, the fifth stone that of her courage. The sixth stone symbolizes her clarity and brightness and the seventh stone her fullness of all spiritual enjoyment. Birgitta is summoned as a bride of Christ to honour and glorify Mary, whom God has assumed into heaven and placed with great honour, higher than all the angels, nearest His own Divinity.

The end of this vision makes especially clear that Birgitta considered Mary to be present in the heaven of the Trinity. This concept was not generally accepted by the Scholastics. Thomas explicitly said that Mary was not assumed into the heaven of the Trinity³⁰ (*Summa Th.* III, 27) though he accepted her assumption into heaven. It is clear that Birgitta in this matter speaks in favour of a belief that already was extant among the pious people of the Church, but that was not officially declared a dogma of the Church until 1950 (*Munificentissimus Deus*). In Birgitta's view in the above-mentioned passage, Mary surpasses everything except God Himself. This is precisely the opinion of Anselm's pupil Eadmer in his *Tractatus de Conceptione sanctae Mariae*.³¹ In this chapter of her *De passione Jesu Christi et gloria beatae virginis Mariae eius matris* and elsewhere, Birgitta is more in accordance with the so-called English School than with the Scholastics in her view of Mary.

Birgitta's statements on Mary are much more similar to those of Anselm, Eadmer and the later Duns Scotus, than to those of the Scholastics. It seems appropriate to deal at least with those passages in which she speaks of Mary's immunity in more detail. In *Revelationes Caelestes VI*, 49, Mary explicitly says to Birgitta that she was born free of original sin. *De passione Jesu Christi et gloria beatae virginis Mariae eius Matris*, ch. II (*Revelationes Selectae*, edition Heuser, p. 115 sq.) speaks in favour of the same concept. Mary tells Birgitta how she was conceived. She emphasizes that she was conceived *sine peccato originali* (without original sin) and "not in sin", because her parents had the most perfect marriage. A more exact explanation of this statement is to be found in the preceding passage of the same chapter. Here it is said that Mary was born from the semen of her parents, but that her parents had sexual intercourse against their own will without lust, and only because they wanted to obey God's will revealed to them by an angel.

Consequently, Mary was conceived without any concupiscence of her parents. Soon after her body was created, God infused the soul into the body and both soul and body were sanctified.

What Mary reveals to Birgitta in the vision about the marriage of her parents must be considered against the background of the Augustinian tradition of the Middle Ages, according to which carnal corruption was the result of libidinous procreation. So the revelation seems to indicate that Mary was conceived in a way that preserved her from carnal corruption. This interpretation is in accordance with the explicit statement that she was not conceived in original sin, whereas the sanctification of Mary's body and soul (*Rev. Cael. I, 9*) points towards a "sanctification in utero," as this was proclaimed by the Scholastics. Here we might ask the question, why Birgitta considered a sanctification necessary, when Mary was conceived without original sin, as is emphatically stated in the same passage. The answer seems to be that Mary's parents, who did not sin when they conceived Mary, were born in original sin themselves.

It seems that in spite of the fact that Birgitta considered Mary to be conceived without original sin, she also assumed an *infectio carnis* in Mary's case because Mary was conceived by people who were themselves conceived in original sin. (See *Revelationes Caelestes V*, interrogatio 13). This explanation of Mary's sanctification in the womb of her mother is in accordance with *Rev. Cael. V*, interrogatio 16, revelatio 13, where it is said that Mary was pure and impure. On the one hand, she was pure because she was beautiful and because no impurity could be found in her; on the other hand, she was considered impure because she descended from Adam and was born from sinners, although she was conceived without sinful lust, so that Christ might be born from her without sin. Mary never sinned (*Sermo passim*). She possessed all the virtues (*Rev. Cael. I, 42*): humility, obedience and charitable love. Although God is the source of all virtues, Mary possesses the same virtues as God. Mary says to Birgitta that whomever sees God, sees her, and whomever sees her, sees divinity and humanity in her as though in a mirror. For whomever sees God, sees the three persons of the Trinity in Him, and whoever sees Mary, sees the Trinity in a certain way. This is because the Divinity has enclosed her in Himself, filling her with all the virtues. *Rev. Cael. I, 29* describes how Birgitta had a vision of Mary who, as a reward for her humility, was seated in heaven,

near the Divine Majesty, surrounded by the blessed souls and the angels. Another vision (*Rev. Cael.* I, 49) elucidates how Mary was rewarded for her obedience and given the power to forgive sinners who came to her in true contrition of the heart. God loved Mary from eternity, long before He created her. Among all things that were envisioned by God, before He created them, it was Mary whom God loved most dearly. This was because the four elements that would form her future body, would be present in her in the most pure and perfect way. (*Sermo* feria I, lectio I). Their foreknowledge of Mary's future creation was a great comfort to fallen Adam, and to all patriarchs and prophets who hoped for the salvation of mankind. (*Sermo*, feria III, lectio I - ch. VII).

Mary is called "mother of wisdom" (*Sermo*, feria II, lectio I-II). She is the *magistra apostolarum*, who had to stay on earth for a while after Christ's assumption into heaven, to teach the apostles and to comfort the martyrs (*Sermo*, feria VI, lectio I). She is even said to have made many converts among the Jews by her way of life and teaching. Christ had filled Mary with the Holy Spirit even before He sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles (*Oratio* I).

On the basis of her revelations, Birgitta depicts Mary as a woman of great ethical, spiritual and intellectual qualities. The stress laid on Mary's intellectual qualities and on her active role in the teaching of Christ's doctrine makes Birgitta's concept of Mary very special. The ethical qualities of Mary were stressed by many patristic authors, but the Mary-picture of most early Church Fathers reflected their own views of what a virtuous woman should be. The Mary-picture of patristic literature is, with some exceptions,³² that of a virtuous, but very passive woman, who stayed in the house, and certainly did not teach the apostles. Birgitta's Mary-picture is the more remarkable, when we think of the fact that the great Scholastic, Thomas Aquinas³³ did not have a very high opinion of the intellectual capacities of women in general, and considered women's intelligence inferior to that of man. Birgitta, however, had a very high opinion of women's intellectual potential. According to the rule inspired in her by Christ Himself, the abbess of the convent is representative of the Holy Virgin. This implies that the abbess must be ethically, spiritually and intellectually gifted, and that such a woman could be found. In spite of her belief in women's intelligence, Birgitta maintained a more traditional concept of women's

role, in *Rev. Cael.* IV, ch. 84. Here the relation between man and wife is discussed: a wife must always be subject to her husband, since she can be dangerous to her husband by her attractiveness.

3. *Concept of God*

Birgitta's concept of God differs from that of Eckhart in a certain respect. She explicitly says that God created us out of His great love of mankind and for no reason other than to make many people share in His eternal joy. (*Sermo* I, I). She emphatically adds that God did not need us in any way. Eckhart, however, established a mutual dependence of the world on God and of God on the world.

Birgitta stresses the unity of the Holy Trinity:

There are three Persons and one perfect Divinity in them. However these three Persons are coequal and as such present in all three of them. For in all three of them there is one will, one wisdom, one power, one virtue, one charity and one joy (*Sermo* I, I).

Against this background it becomes understandable that she speaks of Christ as the Creator (*Or.* II of the 15 pious *Orationes*). In the Holy Trinity there is nothing earlier or later, nothing greater or smaller, nothing divided or blended; there is one will, one Eternity, one Power and one Glory (*Rev. Cael.* VII, ch. 48). In contradiction to St. Augustine in his *De Trinitate*,³⁴ Brigitta does not identify the Wisdom in particular with the Son, or the Power with the Father. The *Logos* is never separated from the Father or from the Holy Spirit, but He is always united to God, the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, also in the humanity of Christ. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are inextricably bound to each other from eternity. (*Rev. Cael.* III, 26).

God knew all things – the four elements included – in advance in Himself, before He created them. Everything created was eternally present in its uncreated condition in the sight of God. Then, God created all things most perfectly according to their uncreated form (*Sermo* I, I–II).³⁵ This doctrine that all things have their archetypal example in God, is a truly Augustinian concept (*De diversis*

quaestionibus 83, no 46), and is also found in St. Thomas (*Summa Theologiae* I, 9, 18a, 4m).

4. *Birgitta's Doctrine on the Trinity*

Birgitta had more than one vision of the Trinity. In the vision reported in *Rev. Cael.* 8, ch. 47 and 48, Birgitta tells how she saw a very great and beautiful house in heaven. In this house was a reading desk, on which a book was laying. An angel and a devil were standing before this desk. The devil was speaking, saying that the Lord had something great in mind. For this reason the angel was working to promote the work of the Lord, but he, the devil, was trying to destroy the Lord's work. The devil said that he and the angel were both wanting the same object. However, he could not hold it because of its heat, and the angel could not hold it because of its coldness. Birgitta did not understand all this. The apparition of the reading desk was like the ray of a shining sun, having a white, a golden and a red colour. The golden colour was like a sun, the white like snow, and the red like a red rose. Birgitta saw all three colours, even when she focused her attention on one of the colours. Looking upwards to the desk, she could not comprehend its height nor its depth or width. Then she saw the book that was laying on the desk. It was radiating like shining gold. Its words were not written in ink, but they were "living words" and speaking. Birgitta did not understand this either.

Then the meaning of the vision was revealed to her. The desk means the Godhead before the egress of the Persons, to wit the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Birgitta could not understand the dimensions of the desk, because God has no beginning and no ending. He is and He was and He will be infinite. The fact that Birgitta saw all three colours in every colour, means that in all eternity, God, the Father is in the Son and in the Spirit, and that the Son eternally is in the Father and in the Spirit, and that the Spirit eternally is in both the Father and the Son. It also means that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in nature and distinguished in the particularity of the Persons. The red colour refers to the Son, who added human nature to His Person. The white colour refers to the Holy Spirit, through whom sins are

washed away, whereas the golden colour refers to the Father, who is the beginning and end of all things. However, this does not mean that there is greater perfection in the Father than there is in the Son, or that the Father should be earlier in time than the Son, for the Father is what the Son is. It only means that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are distinguished in Person, and are one in essence. The vision of the three colours is a revelation of the Trinity. It reveals the threefoldness and the unity of the Trinity. There is one will, one eternity and one power and glory in the Trinity. Although the Son belongs to the Father and the Spirit to both the Father and the Son, the Father never was without the Son, nor without the Spirit, and the Son and the Holy Spirit never were without the Father.

5. *Concept of Human Nature*

According to Birgitta, God created mankind after some of the angels had fallen through misuse of their free will (*Sermo* II, II); *Rev. Cael.* V, Interrogatio IX, rep. q. 2). God had originally made the angels as bodiless spirits in the beginning and before time and the world had come to existence (*in principio et ante tempora et saecula*). The angels were endowed with free will, which they should use in accordance with the will of God and to His glory. Some of the angels, however, fell into sin. They did not use their will in accordance with God's will. Then God wanted to replace these sinful angels by creating man. Man was created as a being consisting of soul and body, and gifted with free will. Man could be worthy of such an honour, originally given to the angels, by working and using his free will in accordance with the will of God. For this reason, Birgitta says, man was given a body. Otherwise, man could not work and consequently, could not deserve the angelic honour he was destined for. The body is given to man to be of service to the soul. The limbs of the body should give the soul an image of the virtues. The soul is a spiritual being. It is fiery, and its nature excels that of the body. It is the soul that gives life and warmth to the body. The soul comes from God, is immortal and its nature is similar to that of the angels (*Rev. Cael.* V, interrogatio II, rep. q. 3; *Rev. Cael.* V, interrogatio IX, rep. q. 2). Because he was given a

rational soul, man is a being between the angels and the animals. The animals and all earthly things are created for man's benefit. Man must make good use of them.

From the time of Adam's fall every human is born stained with original sin. Baptism sets man free from Adam's original sin, to be punished and die only for his own sins (*Rev. Cael. V*, interrogatio 14, rep. q. 3). Christ, who was born without original sin, was baptized to set an example of the new way to heaven (*Rev. Cael. V*, interrogatio X, rep. q. 6). Baptism replaced circumcision (*Rev. Cael. V*, interrogatio X, solutio V) which Christ himself had submitted to. Christ could avoid the reproach that He abolished circumcision because He did not want it for Himself (*Rev. V*, interrogatio X, rep. q. 5). In *Rev. Cael. II*, ch. I it is said that all little children, baptized or unbaptized, who die before they have reached the age of discernment, will receive the mercy of God. Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven according to Luke 12: 32. All others must make their own choice to take the way to paradise. (*Rev. Cael. II*, ch. I). This way to paradise was opened by Christ when He assumed human flesh and suffered for the salvation of souls (*Rev. II*, ch. 15).

Man must live on earth in accordance with the will of God. Man's destination is heavenly paradise. However, some will reach heaven, others will be damned. In contradiction to Catherine of Siena, Birgitta, following the Augustinian tradition, emphasizes the doctrine of predestination (*Or. V*). From eternity, the Chosen who will be saved through Christ's suffering, and, those who will be damned because of their sins, are predestined.

6. Political Thought

The eighth book of the *Revelationes Caelestes* is directed to the kings of this world by the heavenly emperor (Christ) Himself. It is God's wish that this world is governed by a twofold power: by worldly and by spiritual authority (VIII, ch. I). Worldly authority is ordained by God and given to the different kings of this world. Since man did not obey God, man has to obey his equal, man. God gives the king the power to govern his subjects. The king must be just in governing and in passing judgement. Justice is always linked with charity (VIII, 48) and evil kings are considered murderers and

thieves by God. The king must be a man of high moral character and so must his wife (VIII, ch. 8).

St. Peter is the prototype of spiritual power on earth, St. Paul that of worldly power. All future popes and worldly governors are measured against them. God, speaking to Peter and Paul, spoke to all future popes and worldly governors. The concept of divided worldly and clerical power was not alien to the 14th century. The actual conflict between Pope and Emperor in the 14th century laid the foundation for many modern theories of government. In his *Defensor Pacis*, Marsilius of Padua had before the middle of the 14th century, already rebuked the supremacy of papacy. William Occam had favoured the idea of divided power at an earlier date in his *Octo quaestiones de potestate pappae* and in his *De electione Caroli IV*. However, Occam did not go as far as Marsilius, who even wanted to make the Church part of the state and more or less subject to it. Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle's political thought, had accepted the existence of divided authority, but he always spoke in favour of the necessity of harmony between Church and state. Neither Occam nor Marsilius wanted all people or, at least, all Christian people to be united in one state. Both were defenders of the growing particularism of different States and different governors.³⁶ This idea was rather advanced for the 14th century. So it is remarkable that Birgitta accepts this particularism. Moreover, the existence of different kings belongs to the will of God as this is revealed to her. This becomes clear for instance in *Rev. Cael.* IV, ch 105. Here Birgitta gives Christ's warning to King Edward of England and to Phillipe de Valois, King of France, who were at war since 1336. However, her moral demands to these kings, and her moral demands to governors in general, elucidate, that in her opinion royal power is given by God and that everyone who possesses this power is responsible to God for the way he uses it.

In the beginning of this chapter we noted that Birgitta's political activities were unthinkable without her mysticism. But a stronger claim can be made: her political thought is nourished by this mysticism and her political activities are the due consequences of her theological and philosophical ideas.

IV. SUMMARY

Born to a noble family in circumstances with anticipated both her personal piety and her intellectual influence, Birgitta Suecica addressed some of the most significant social, philosophical, theological and political issues of her day. She used her personal fortune to benefit the worst off of her society. She personally founded hospitals and a double monastery, while living an ascetic life.

Birgitta was a mystic who did not withdraw herself from social and political activities. She participated in the discussion of the philosophical and theological issues of her era, developing a concept of God, a concept of man, an account of political authority and, most importantly for women, a Mariology in which the mother of God is wise, active, and, an ideal of womanhood. Birgitta's active Mary-picture is to be considered very special and a breakthrough in mediaeval theological thought. The very passive Mary-picture of the Fathers was favoured by Catholic theologians until the twentieth century. It was only then that there was a change for a more active Mary-picture under influence of Karl Rahner's book, *Maria und die Kirche*.³⁷

NOTES

1. The bull of canonization speaks of Sigrid instead of Ingeborg. The name of Sigrid certainly is an error. Sigrid is the name of Birgitta's grandmother.
2. Karola Adalsten, *Licht aus dem Norden*, Freiburg 1951, p. 104.
3. See Adalsten, *op. cit.* p. 59.
4. See Adalsten, *op. cit.* p. 102.
5. See *Rule*, ch. 21.
6. In the original Swedish: *Uppenbarelser*.
7. See Karola Adalsten, *op. cit.* p. 152.
8. A spiritual vision is to be considered the result of a spiritual experience or feeling, brought out in the imaginary language of the person concerned.
9. See K. Adalsten, *op. cit.* p. 122. As for the concept of intellectual visions see my chapter on Hadewych in this volume.
10. See for a detailed discussion of the doctrine of exemplarism, my chapter on Hadewych. The Platonic Ideas are in the Mind of God, according to Augustine in *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, no. 46 in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bruges, 1952. The Ideas are the examples of everything created in Augustine's view. See also Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* I, 15, Editio Leonina, Rome, 1954, sq.

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11. See Wolfgang Beinert and Heinrich Petri, *Handbuch der Marienkunde* Regensburg 1984, p. 159 sq.
12. See Durandus of Mende in *Rationale* 6, 24 (*De assumptione*) ed. Venice 1568, fol. 295.
13. *Sermo In Apoc.*, Migne, P.L. 17, 876 H. Barré "L'apport Marial de l'Orient à l'Occident de S. Ambroise à S. Anselme," (= Études Mariales I) in B.S.F.E.M. 19 (1963). See also W. Beinert, *op. cit.* p. 161.
14. See W. Beinert *op. cit.* p. 166.
15. Strabo, *Hom. in Mat.*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 114, 859 B.
16. See Ps. Hieronymus, *Ep.* 9, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 30, 122–142.
17. A.M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Fruehscholastik*, II, Regensburg 1954, p. 359–367.
18. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* III, 27, I sol.
19. *Innocentius IV* in *Commentaria super libros quinque decretalium*, L.I., Tit. II, c.5, Frankfurt 1570.
20. See my chapter on Makrina in vol. I of this series. The fact that Mary was "deipara" required her great ethical qualities in the view of the Fathers.
21. Paschasius Radbertus, *De partu Virginis*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 120; 1372.
22. Anselmus in *De conceptu virginali et originali peccato* 3, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 158, 435 A.
23. Eadmer, *Tractatus* 12, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 159, 305 C–D English edition by H. Thurston and T. Slater, Freiburg, Bresgau, 1904.
24. Duns Scotus, *De Ordinatione* III, d. 3 q1 in *Opera Omnia*, Joannis Duns Scoti, edited by P. Carolus Balić, Rome 1950.
25. Thomas in *Summa Theologiae* III, 27, 5 s. 9.
26. Albertus Magnus, *De Annuntiatione*, passim, in *Opera Omnia*, edition Vivès, Paris 1890.
27. *Revelationes Selectae*, S. Birgittae, ed. A. Heusner, Cologne: 1861, "De Sanctis" p. 253.
28. Edition L. Hollmann, Upsala 1956.
29. Edition A. Heuser, *Revelationes Selectae S. Birgittae*, Cologne 1881.
30. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* III, 27.
31. Eadmer, *Tractatus de Conceptione sanctae Mariae*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 159, col. 301–309. English edition by H. Thurston and T. Slater, Freiburg, Bresgau 1904. See also Kari Børresen in *L'anthropologie médiévale et theologie Mariale*, Oslo 1971.
32. The Cappadocians had a more "advanced" opinion of woman in general and consequently of Mary. See my chapter on Makrina in vol. I, of this series.
33. See Thomas' commentary on *Gen* I, 27, in *Summa Theologiae*.
34. Augustine, *De Trinitate* passim.
35. "Unde omnia illa quae creanda erant, ea forma eoque modo postea pulcherrima creavit, sicut ab aeterno ipsius aspectui pulcherrime astabant increata."
36. See also Jacques Le Goff, *Les Intellectuels au Moyen Age*, Paris 1965. (in *Le Temps qui Court*) p. 160 sq.
37. Karl Rahner, *Maria und die Kirche*. Cologne: 1944.

9. Julian of Norwich

ELIZABETH N. EVASDAUGHTER

Julian of Norwich, not only the “first English woman of letters,”¹ but also “more metaphysical than the other English mystics,”² is of interest to philosophy because of her *Book of Showings*. Although it has been read in the past for its religious or poetic value, it contains, in the longer version, a treatise on knowledge, covering the possibility of knowing God, the sources of such knowledge, its limits, and its value. In this paper I will not analyze Julian’s metaphysics, theology, devotion, style, or sources, except as they impinge on her epistemology. Neither will I examine recent controversies over her orthodoxy, her state of life before she became an anchoress, her theological sympathy with one religious order or another, her intended audience, or the sincerity of her orthodoxy.

Julian’s description of Christ’s revelations to her is accompanied and supported by a discourse on knowledge, astonishing not only by its presence in a mystical work, but also by its orderly development. The prominence of her commentary on epistemological implications of her visions makes it seem odd that most writers on the text have not mentioned it. However, their remarks indicate that they have been reading for other types of content. Some of them may not be able to see philosophical reasoning in a woman; others, in a mystic. However, Julian clearly knew the epistemological issues of her day and took positions on them.

I. BIOGRAPHY

Julian was born in 1342. In 1373 during a serious illness she had a series of visions she attributed to Christ or the Holy Spirit. Sudden-

ly cured, she wrote a vivid, not quite complete account of the experience, perhaps the same year. She became an anchoress at an unknown date, a circumstance which provided time for prayer and reflection, and probably for study and religious discussion as well, so that in 1393 she was able to expand and clarify her manuscript.

Julian believed that revelations to individuals pertained to particular circumstances (Ch. 43). Her revelations seem to have been directed toward readers unsettled by the Black Death (Ch. 64), which had afflicted Norwich in 1348–1349, 1361–1362, and again in 1369. Since she had been about six, nineteen, and twenty-seven during its assaults on Norwich, her outlook might have been deeply affected by the despair of those around her; her *Book of Showings* answered the fear of damnation accompanying the Bubonic plague as it crossed Europe like a tidal wave.

The Hundred Years War, the Great Schism, the crushing of the Peasants Revolt in Norwich by the militaristic Bishop Despencer, Wycliffe's condemnation, and the bishop's siege of Ypres³ – all these events brought unnatural poverty and death, discouragement and depression to Norwich. Julian's response was a more determined search for rational supports for hope.

Another dimension of her life which affected the optimism of the *Showings* was her gender. In the shorter version⁴ she argued against the proposition that a woman should not teach theology, and in so doing she put the concessive clause as follows "I am a woman, lewd, feeble and frail" (Ch. vi). I understand this perhaps ironic remark as a statement of clerical teaching on her nature as a "daughter of Eve." She wrote from her female nature as she saw it, not only as it had been described to her. She managed to express a number of original opinions. She did not catalogue sins, as most male writers did,⁵ nor mention lechery,⁶ though male writers on religion, like the author of the *Anchoran Rule* (*Ancrene Wisse*), usually treated it as dangerous and did so at some length. Julian had an intuitive sense of a natural human tendency toward the good. Again, her development of the motif of Christ as a tender-hearted mother is fuller than that of male writers. The longer version,⁷ written after Julian's menopause, deletes the short passage on her low status as a woman in the eyes of the clergy, but includes revelations she had earlier doubted. All these attitudes paralleled and influenced her epistemological optimism.

Being an anchoress affected the longer version of 1393, in my view, because of the years of religious and philosophical study which were involved, and especially because of the questions people must have asked her both about her visions and about their lives. Julian took her state of life seriously, and even if she had not read the *Anchoran Rule*, she would have understood her role much as it is explained there:

Recluses who live under the eaves of the church . . . ought to be so holy in their lives that all Holy Church, that is, Christian people, may lean upon them, while they hold her up with the holiness of their lives and their blessed prayer. It is for this reason that an anchoress is called an anchoress, and anchored under a church like an anchor under the side of a ship, to hold it, so that the waves and storms do not pitch it over. So all Holy Church, which is called a ship, shall be anchored to the anchoress, and she shall hold it secure so that the puffing and blowing of the devil, that is, temptations, do not pitch it over.⁸

It seems inescapable that Julian thought of the doubt around her, which formerly she might have shared, as a storm which she could counteract with the weight of religious knowledge.

The influence of intellectual currents on Julian's thought is under debate. Colledge and Walsh, editors of the most thorough edition to date, argue that Julian received a monastic education.⁹ Pelphrey refutes their arguments, denying that we can ascertain how she was educated.¹⁰ Certainly she could have heard sermons in the vernacular,¹¹ some of which might have incorporated free translations of scriptural passages.¹² She could have conferred with her confessor¹³ or received further instruction in theology.¹⁴ Julian referred to herself as "unlettered" (Ch. 2), but she probably meant by comparison to the male philosopher-theologians of the day. She probably learned to read, if only when she became an anchoress, for these were expected to read religious books.¹⁵ Monks, hermits or friars might have wanted to assist Julian with her education, especially after she had visions which their education was well-suited to clarify.

There were a number of such men present. Pelphrey writes that:

In Julian's day, Norwich was second only to London in population and wealth, and, of the provincial centers, only Lincoln possibly had more parish churches. There were three colleges of secular priests . . . The cathedral was a Benedictine priory . . . The library was one of the finest in late medieval England . . . The Franciscans had a 'studia generalia' there to which students came from many parts of Europe.¹⁶

He adds that there were also distinguished Carmelites and less distinguished Dominicans, and finally, that prized spiritual books of high quality were often bequeathed. Julian lived in a theologically rich and active culture, which offered many opportunities for learning. Julian's text proves that she participated in that intellectual life.

II. THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

Julian did not define knowledge as such, but her use of the word made her assumptions clear. She did not think, with Augustine, that "no pure truth can be expected from sensation,"¹⁷ nor did she think, with Occam, that universals or concepts exist only in the mind.¹⁸ On this issue, Julian assumed with Aristotle and Aquinas that sensory images and concepts are informative of reality. Again, she thought of knowledge as an open set of propositions, philosophic or theological, and as an understanding through them of the realities they represent. Her feeling that all these forms of knowledge were equally valuable and harmonious was probably one source of her distress over the contradictions that arose during her visions.

1. *The Possibility of Knowing God*

Julian stressed on the possibility of knowing God, so much so as to give the impression that she was answering the opposite proposition. Her predecessors, the philosopher-theologians of the 13th and early 14th centuries, relied on Dionysius the Areopagite (pseudo-

Dionysius). An unnamed author translated Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* into English during Julian's lifetime as *Deonise Hid Divinite*, with very few alterations. In the English version, Dionysius stressed, like Clement of Alexandria,¹⁹ that human intelligence is lower than God, no doubt as a way of honoring the Infinite.

Julian mentioned the legend of Dionysius, then called St. Denis of France (Ch. 18). Like him, she held that God is above our knowing, but she did not follow Dionysius' method of approaching God. He hoped to bring the statue out of the stone by chipping away less than accurate ideas of God, "by seeing naught and by unknowing, to see and to know God that is above all seeing and all knowing". He taught that what can be denied of God, for example, speech or anger, rests on God's transcendence; whereas what can be affirmed rests on God's immanence in all things.²⁰

With Julian, God's transcendence was to be honored, but unlike most mystics,²¹ she held that the divine immanence was the better source of knowledge and therefore the better way to approach God. What we learn of God can be expected to make us love him spontaneously, and is therefore a more natural cause of honor. Julian invested much more energy, therefore, in laying out what we can know of God, than in listing what we cannot know. Though what we know of God is only partial and must be given through revelation, we can know what God is in our regard: loving.

In her treatment of this issue as of others, Julian acted like an Oxford theologian, who had the right to examine theological and philosophical tradition and say *sic et non*²² – to select, affirm, deny, replace.

2. *What can be Known of God*

The frequently Thomistic phraseology of the longer version suggests that Julian had read Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* or attended sermons or lectures on it. Aquinas' canonization in 1323 gave greater official approval to his teaching, and Pepler remarks that the *Showings* reads as if Julian had been studying Part I of the *Summa* for 15 years.²³ To some extent, he is right; however, she took a more independent attitude toward it than most Thomists take.

Aquinas defined human happiness as knowing God personally in

the next life; Julian agreed. She mentioned often that we will not have the happiness of seeing God until we reach heaven (Ch. 2, 51, etc.). The cause she gave for the delay was not, as with him, the interference of our senses with direct knowledge of spirits, but the need for further spiritual growth (Ch. 46). This explanation probably came from Aquinas' thoughts on human virtue and the gifts of the Holy Spirit rather than from his treatise on our knowledge of God.

Aquinas taught that we are unable to see God in this life, unless by an exceptional gift of rapture. Julian learned this distinction from her visionary experience. She ranked knowing God highest among forms of prayer (Ch. 6), and unlike many monastic writers, she identified love with knowledge.

Julian wrote of God's attributes or traits as given; whereas, Aquinas wanted to show how reason can arrive at them without revelation. Julian accepted them, apparently, judging from her names for them, from theological philosophy, not from Scripture alone. She focused, among God's attributes, primarily on being, presence, providence, love, and unchangeability (Chs. 11, 53 55, 79), perhaps because knowledge of these would reduce human distress over depressing events. She introduced these attributes of God in her vision of the divine as the central point of a circle. This metaphor appeared first in the West in Dionysius' *Divine Names*. Julian thought God's love to be the highest light (Ch. 67) and devoted most of her manuscript to defining that love, using for the purpose whatever articles of Catholic faith she could, arguing, for example, that the Beatific Vision comes from God's desire to end our pain (Chs. 6, 38, 72). As well as deducing the rational implications of truths known through revelation, (Aquinas' concept of theology), Julian also deduced the religious implications of relevant truths known through reason. Her application of reason to revealed principles seems the most Thomistic quality of her book, for some religious writers, like Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard Rolle, disliked the use of Scholastic forms of reasoning, much preferring a purely poetic approach. Like Aquinas, too, Julian wanted to protect faith from error, but in this regard she was more concerned to avoid errors herself than she was to protect the Church in general. Where the whole Church was concerned, she was far more eager to strengthen Christians against those errors about the faith

which lead to despair, such as believing that God does not love sinners, than to debate the whole network of errors that shadowed the dogmatic system.

Pelphrey thought that if any religious order influenced Julian's theology it must have been the Franciscan.²⁴ The Franciscans dominated Oxford at the time, so that the two important philosophers who most nearly preceded Julian in England were Franciscans, both of whom studied or taught at Oxford before moving on to the University of Paris. The first, Duns Scotus, "regarded himself as defending orthodoxy against dangerous Thomistic innovation".²⁵ It is true that the value Julian placed on the mind made her more like Aquinas than like Duns Scotus, who placed the will higher than reason both in humans and in God. However, unlike other Thomists, she learned from later theologians. It may be, for example, that Julian studied Duns Scotus' philosophy and theology.

On the one hand, Julian took a strong stand against Duns Scotus' argument for God's unknowability, namely that God's will is higher than his reason and that his freedom puts him above the rational, a consciously anti-Thomist position. Julian continually asserted, against Duns, that what God wills is that we should know him (Chs. 36, etc.).

On the other hand, Julian would have agreed with Duns Scotus both when he said that reason alone is not sufficient to provide knowledge of God,²⁶ and when he said that we can form an idea of God's being or goodness by comparison to ourselves. Duns argued that in order to defend our ability to form concepts of absolute being or absolute goodness we must say that our being and goodness are substantially the same as God's, differing only in our not being absolute.²⁷ Julian wrote a beautiful passage on the identity of the substance of our souls and the substance of God (while denying, of course, that God is a man) (Chs. 53–55). Julian applied this identity of substance, which Duns called "univocity," against depression and unwarranted guilt, rather than to epistemology. Nevertheless, to hold it puts her on Duns' side of the issue. She wrote, "Whether our urge is to know God or to know our own soul matters little: both are good and true" (Ch. 56).

William of Occam was the second of the Franciscan philosophers who immediately preceded Julian. He died approximately five years after Julian's birth. She might have been applying Occam's

“Razor” – the rule of not positing extra beings where a being already at hand could provide causation – when she omitted all angels except fallen ones from her book. She did not apply his rule, except for a moment (Ch 66), by attributing her visions to her mind rather than to the Holy Spirit. Occam confirmed Duns’ position that God cannot be known by reason alone, basing his view on different premises.²⁸

Julian’s interest in contradiction might have come from a familiarity with Occam, but her concern was not with contradictions our reason might offer to faith, as his was.²⁹ She confronted one set of contradictions internal to the Catholic faith, namely, those arising in the field between God’s saving love and our human sinful behavior:

1. How could God permit sin?
2. Is God involved in sin by his involvement in the actions and motions of all creatures?
3. Can the elect sin?
4. Could a God who loved all creatures fail to predestine some to heaven?
5. Can God hate, blame, be angry with sinners? And, for her the most troubling:
6. Since Christ had promised her to make all things end well (Ch. 32), how can anyone be damned?

The epistemological question she brings up in relation to this problem is, how can we resolve contradictions between propositions we derive from various sources of religious knowledge? (Ch. 45–50)

Julian repeatedly applied both reason and prayer to these problems; she progressed through a number of answers from Christ and from her mind (Chs. 27–51). One of the implications of this section of her book is that adherence to one preferred argument and suppression of others may always be premature. For students of epistemology, it is also of interest that the manuscript never resolves the final contradiction. Christ insisted to Julian that he would make all end well, and that he would justify the Church’s teaching on damnation, but that he would not reveal how until the last day (Ch. 32). Julian preferred this paradox to admitting that human holiness, love, or “highest blessedness” could co-exist with evil, hate, or “deepest pain” after death. That contradiction she rejected absolutely (Chs. 52, 72). Some of Julian’s modern commentators

have attempted to resolve this conflict for her by positing, however tentatively, universal salvation – not only as God’s intention, with Julian (Ch. 31), but as a final result.³⁰ Julian, however much she may have preferred this solution, refused it. Here as in regard to other issues, she modelled intellectual honesty, rather than preaching it. When she did not know how to resolve a problem, she said so.

The reaction of the Franciscan philosophers to Aquinas emphasized the impossibility of knowing about God through human thought. Both Duns and Occam denied that God’s existence can be proved, and said the same of many of his attributes. Occam thought that our concepts do not necessarily refer to any reality outside our minds.³¹ Their intention, no doubt, was to argue for the possibility of knowing about God through faith. However, the impact of their continual assertion, with Aquinas, of the impossibility of knowing much about him through reason, might have spread discouragement, first through their clerical students at Oxford and Paris, and then through them to all Europe. It may be that the *Cloud of Unknowing*, which appeared sometime between 1350 and 1400, a manuscript composed by the translator, some think, of *Deonise Hid Divinite*, was as much an expression of discouragement about God’s inaccessibility as of determination to love him.

3. *Knowing Through Christ*

References have been made by scholars to possible influence on Julian by *The Cloud of Unknowing* probably only because both works urge us to love God through prayer and both were written in English in the second half of the fourteenth century. Julian’s prominent ideas on the knowledge of God in *The Book of Showings* contrast with prominent ideas in *The Cloud*, and may have been offered to contradict it. The author of *The Cloud* advised the reader to advance beyond meditating on the passion of Christ, and instead, to make acts of love blindly to the unknowable God. Having created such a hierarchy, this anonymous writer was able to use negative language about Christocentric prayer:

Thought will chatter on more and more until, as it brings you lower and lower, it will eventually bring you down to the remembrance of His passion”.³²

If the prayerful soul persisted in thinking of the Passion of Christ, the author warned, the reader would not advance as high.³³

Julian took the position that knowing God is the highest form of prayer, and she refused to leave the Cross of Christ behind (Ch. 19). She made a strong case against the necessity of doing so. She could not see why the Passion should be avoided, since the Trinity was involved in it (Ch. 4) and could be known through it. In later commentary added to the narrative of her first vision, she made the point that “where Jesus is spoken of, the blessed Trinity is always to be understood” (Ch. 4). Toward the end of this passage of commentary, she noted that “all the time he was showing these things to my inward sight” – the relevance of love to the doctrines of the Trinity, the Creation, Mary, God’s presence, the goodness of Creation – “I still seemed to see with my actual eyes the continual bleeding of his head” (Ch. 7). This remark exemplifies Julian’s careful notation of all the circumstances of her visions, even if they might displease one clerical writer or another; her care for truth may, ironically, help to explain the lack of clerical circulation of her manuscript in her own time. More important, this observation of the simultaneity of spiritual vision of God and imaginal sight of Christ may be read as an answer to what seemed to her the unnatural preference for what we do not know about God over what we do know about him.

Julian was as alarmed, I think, by the general emphasis on the unknowability of God as she was by the lack of religious instruction resulting from the death of so many clerics due to the plague, and by the number of priests who knew no Latin. She specifically mentioned the uninstructed as her audience (Ch. 9). She was not concerned about them because she feared they would turn to secular interests, or develop other religions, but because she feared they would become depressed. For this reason her interest in epistemology may be attributable to her realization that she could use it to make her teaching more believable. She consistently argued that if revelation is the only source of our positive religious knowledge, then (1) we should look to revelation, (2) we can rely on the knowledge of God found there, and (3) we can free ourselves by this knowledge from despair and discouragement, having found an intelligent basis for confidence in life (Ch. 83).

Julian called attention to her having learned through her visions

how happy we will be in heaven (Ch. 40), how loving the Trinity feels toward us and toward all creation, and the pleasure it gives God when a simple soul comes to him (Ch. 5), how the Beatific Vision will end pain (Ch. 72), and how “doubts which tend toward despair God will have turned into love through our knowledge of his love” (Ch. 74). Julian argued that although we think we see God very little, God wills that we see him all the time in prayer (Ch. 10). Her teaching was a counsel of the possible. Instead of despairing because of what we cannot know, we should build our hope on awareness of what can be known. This trust in the human mind is what made epistemology pivotal to Julian’s theology.

With Aquinas, reason’s dependence on the senses, and with Duns Scotus, reason’s having been clouded by the fall, meant that we could not know God. Julian rejected Aquinas, stating firmly that God in creating our souls did not use any material, as he had done with our bodies, and concluding, “it follows that there can be nothing at all between God and man’s soul” (Ch. 53). Although sin clouds reason, the concepts which we acquire are formed, held, and used by the spiritual soul, and contribute to our spiritual progress. Even our senses were united with God from the moment of creation (Ch. 55). Julian studied the nobility of reason from a metaphysical perspective in her later commentary on the visions as a whole (Chs. 53–59), emphasizing that human souls differ in no way from the substance of God (Ch. 54). She rejected any distinction between reason and faith, or between learning philosophic truths and understanding revealed truths:

Faith is nothing else but a right understanding . . . that with regard to our essential being we are in God, and God in us, though we do not see him (Ch. 54).

Similarly:

Our faith comes from the natural love of our soul, and the clear light of our reason, and the stability of our mind, given by God when he first made us. And when our soul was breathed into our body, and our senses began to work, at once mercy and grace began to work too. And such a foundation enables us to accept gifts that lead on to eternal life (Ch. 55).

This synthesis is a far cry from the usual simplistic presentation of faith as superior to reason and the truths of faith as superior to those reason can attain.

Julian defended the usefulness of reason regarding religious knowledge because the mind is the site, as it were, of the Holy Spirit's instruction – of our acquisition and understanding of religious knowledge (Ch. 7). Julian argued that temporality, or change through moments of time (frequently represented by theologians and mystics as “the soul's ascent up a ladder” of perfect knowledge) is not the only consideration. She was considering God's “point of view” from outside time when she wrote, “The moment our soul was made sensual, at that moment was it destined from all eternity to be the City of God” and “God never leaves the soul in which he dwells” (Ch. 55). Once the eternal value of reason was established, Julian was interested in looking at its usefulness through time. At this point, she said that we acquire knowledge of our soul only when we know God and know that the soul resembles God who encloses it (Ch. 56). Her view of the human soul was unusually positive for that period, but Julian does not discount the Church's customary position, and even seems rather pleased that we learn to know our souls through the trials God gives. By thus learning our need for God's mercy and love, we learn where our happiness lies in this life, namely in God's mercy (Chs. 56, 58).

Julian's claim that it is Christ's “pleasure and bliss to reign in our intelligence” (Ch. 57) seems to oppose intentionally the anti-intellectualism of many religious writers of the period. As I mentioned earlier, Julian often asked her readers to advert to God's attitude toward our ability to know the divine. At one point she expanded the refrain as follows: “His will is to be seen; his will is to be sought; his will is to be awaited and trusted” (Ch. 10); at another: “In this task he wants us to help him, giving him our whole attention, learning his lessons” (Ch. 57). This reasoning was Julian's ultimate argument for God's providing knowledge for ordinary Christians like herself. God wills that people have whatever knowledge would energize the pursuit of salvation. She gladly accepted the views of her predecessors, I believe, when she wrote that

. . . the marvellous consideration and friendliness shown us by our Father and our Maker, through our Lord Jesus Christ, our

Brother and our Savior no living person can know unless it is specially shown him by the inward, abundant grace of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, since this friendliness has been shown “to whomsoever God chooses,” and since God loves all, it is available to all (Ch. 7), although “measured to our individual needs” (Ch. 83). Among other things, her case for knowledge would have served as a defense of her vernacular manuscript.

III. THE SOURCES OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Julian’s practice indicated four sources of religious knowledge: (1) the images of everyday perception, (2) the more complex images created by what we now call the unconscious mind or the creative memory, (3) propositions received from religious teachers, (4) propositions she developed using the first three of these sources as materials. She herself classified the sources of knowledge as three: natural reason, the teaching of Holy Church, and the inner working of grace through the Holy Spirit (Ch. 80). In working with these she assumed personal experience as material both for her reasoning and for the Holy Spirit’s instruction of her mind. Underhill thinks the mystic’s

... experience of the relation between the Absolute and the individual self is the valid part of mysticism, the thing which gives to it its unique importance amongst systems of thought.³⁴

Julian thought so too.

Since visions have the formal primacy among the sources of knowledge as Julian classified them in the *Book of Showings* I will begin with them.

1. *Visions and Certainty*

Reynolds notes Julian’s remarkable objectivity:

Even when she is herself the central figure in what she narrates (as in the account of her illness) the tone is that of an impartial observer.³⁵

Renaudin gives the opposite reason for believing her – the warmth and personal tone of the account, together with the energy the experience gave her. This disagreement tells us that two people with contrasting standards of validity believed Julian. She herself had standards of validity. She thought the visions were not hallucinations, for she noticed an edge between them and the perceived world:

When one might have expected it to have poured to the ground it vanished. Yet the bleeding continued and could be seen by attentive eyes. To me it seemed so copious that had it been real the whole bed and more would have been soaked with blood (Ch. 12).

Thus she acknowledged the reality of her visions, and did not require that what was seen in them correspond to what would have been expected to be seen in non-visionary circumstances.

Julian demanded of the visions that they harmonize with the teaching of the church, that is, “the faith”:

For the Faith of Holy Church which I had understood from the first, and which I hope by the grace of God I had consciously kept and lived by, was ever before my eyes. I was determined never to accept anything contrary to this, so it was with this in mind that I looked at the revelation so diligently. And in this blessed revelation I saw nothing counter to what had been already revealed (Ch. 9).

Julian had been taught that the devil could “mock up” visions as a means of deception, and she was careful. She demanded more than harmony with the older revelation. She stated several times that the revelations added nothing new to the revelation commonly held. For example, there could have been nothing new for her in learning that Christ’s Passion had overcome the Fiend (Ch. 13). What the revelations offered that was new was their suitability to new and individual circumstances (Ch. 83). In the end, Julian

thought of her visions as giving certain knowledge. Her narrative fit Aquinas' analysis of visions as a language God uses to speak to our minds, to convey meaning understandably. As the good friar put it:

The intellect's natural light is strengthened by the infusion of gratuitous light, and sometimes also the images in the imagination are divinely formed, so as to express divine things better than do those which we receive naturally from sensible things, as appears in prophetic visions; while sometimes sensible things, or even voices, are divinely formed to express some divine meaning.³⁶

As Renaudin observes, Julian knew her visions were not real events and she thought of them as symbolic.³⁷ In most instances she was not surprised by their deviance from images common in Catholic art and sermons. She thought each deviance was intentional, designed to carry a divine message. Pepler points out that "The question always uppermost in her mind is not: what do I see? But: what does it mean?"³⁸ He applies this concept to the question of the validity of her visions when he argued that it does not matter whether she was hallucinating or not, since God works through our nature and our circumstances.³⁹ Underhill sees the visions as automatisms, but as automatisms which were

. . . means by which we obtain consciousness of the phenomenal world, . . . an apprehension of that other world whose attainment is humanity's sublimest end.⁴⁰

Julian mentioned grace as strengthening our faculties, and as being the source of the revelations (Ch. 10). Thus she was closer to Aquinas than to Pepler in her analysis of validity. The one concept she might have added to Aquinas's explanation of visions was that the divinely-formed images and sentences carry the power to keep and recall what has been revealed.

Julian's unstated reason for certitude was perhaps her familiarity with God.⁴¹ Nothing in the visions clashed with the God to whom she had become close, as an apparition called up by the devil would have done. Even though Julian insisted that the visions added nothing new to faith, she always identified them as a source of

knowledge, not only in the commentary but also in the narrative.

In present tense commentary on the narrative, Julian worked out the notion of full realization. What I think she meant by this was as follows: It is commonly conceded that propositions of theology or articles of faith can be held loyally without much comprehension. A sudden discovery of their meaning or their significance for personal life can have the impact of new experience. Such an impact may explain the certitude of mystics.⁴² Julian used many different expressions to convey various degrees of understanding or “seeing,” and in all, her intention seems to have been to express the concept of subjective certainty. She “knew for certain” that she was dying, and she may have been, but events reversed themselves and she lived for many years. This “error” she left in the text, possibly to show that she was not claiming inerrancy, possibly to show how much reality her practice-death had.

Julian did not attempt to convey the impression that the visions were uniformly convincing. She found the second so dim and perhaps odd, as to feel uncertain that it was a vision at all, but this perplexity, worry, fear, anxiety – her terms – was ended by a gift of greater insight (Ch. 10). A second less than overwhelming vision was the exemplum I call the Running Servant. It was a visual illustration of one of Christ’s revelations, in which a lord’s servant, running eagerly to do his master’s will, fell into a deep ditch. Julian did not include the illustration in the shorter version, apparently because, as she remarked in the longer, its meaning had not been “wholly clear” at the time (Ch. 45).

A different feeling opposed to certitude was the great puzzlement Julian felt when an implication of the visions seemed to conflict with the faith. For example, “My earlier teaching had been that the mercy of God was shown in the forgiving of his anger after we had sinned,” yet the visions made it clear that there is no anger in God (Chs. 47–49, etc.). It was to clear up this “aweful perplexity”, she noted, that God gave her the exemplum of the Running Servant (Chs. 20, 51), and it did “somewhat ease” her puzzlement (Ch. 53).

Before the final vision of the series, Julian in her fatigue spoke of the visions as “raving,” a judgment which discounted them as completely as some of her critics do; however, she soon abandoned this reaction as wrong on her part.

The last cause of uncertainty I shall mention is the persistent fluctuation in our inner sight. Julian classified this variability among results of our nature, not related to the validity of truths we learn from the Spirit:

Of his goodness he opens the eye of our understanding so that we can SEE; sometimes it is less, sometimes more, according to our God-given ability to receive it (Ch. 52).

She counseled that if a time without understanding persists, we are to trust that God is with us just as if we were still certain of it. Julian was here extending the seventh revelation to apply to intellectual as well as emotional assurance (Ch. 52).

The source of certainty, Julian found in the contemplative person's experience of God's presence:

When the gracious presence of the Lord is felt . . . it produces a wonderful certainty when there is true faith, and gives a sure hope (because of his great charity) (Ch. 65).

In line with this, Julian's last vision, of Christ enthroned in her soul, brought certainty about the visions as a set:

"He gave me to understand for certain that it was he who had showed me all I had seen previously" (Ch. 68).

To Julian, certainty was a result of opening the mind lovingly to God, not the result of proofs of any kind, either scriptural or philosophical.

The idea of certainty in relation to proof was important to Julian. She reminded her readers of it in her last paragraph:

I saw for certain that before ever he made us, God loved us; and that his love has never slackened, nor ever shall (Ch. 86).

I find no defensiveness in Julian's assertions of certitude, for I think she made them to help others accept what had been taught her. Moreover, if others had no visions of their own, she suggested that they could attain contemplation, that is, a loving mental gaze at the

face of Christ, with all the wisdom that would bring (Ch. 71). The text does imply that visions are more vivid and seem more to have burst in from outside, but she said that the resulting expressible knowledge would not be different (Ch. 26).

2. The Church as a Source of Truth

Julian's reliance on the Church as a source of truth is clear both from her reliance on earlier Catholic thinkers and from her statement that she had held to the faith and studied it for a long time before the visions came. A case can be constructed for her independence of mind based on the amount, not only of debate she proffered, but also of deviance in her images and ideas from those ordinarily taught. For example, she described the dehydration of Christ's body after his blood had all been shed and before he died; she spoke as if he were in pain from this, and as if his dying and dehydration in the cold wind had taken a week. These phenomena are surely more reminiscent of the plain around Norwich with the wind blowing from the sea⁴³ and of Julian's own illness than of traditional accounts of Christ's Passion. However, she herself attributed all these horrors to her particular revelation.

Julian's position is not that of mainstream Catholic preachers and writers of her time, who were anxious to dissuade people from major sins, even so anxious on occasion as to effectively quash reasons for hope. Julian in contrast was eager to work against doubt and spiritual sadness as spiritual dangers, because they could lead otherwise good Christians to despair. This motive is what led her to disagree with so many sermons and so many ways of looking at revelations.

Pelphrey writes, "While she claims to hold to the faith of the Church, she boldly acknowledges the fact that the faith (as she understands it) and her visions are apparently incompatible" in regard to the Last Judgement.⁴⁴ Julian claimed that Christ's judgment on the matter of our salvation was a higher judgment than that of the Church (Ch. 45). A non-Catholic Christian today would not view this as heresy, and probably few non-clerical Catholics would do so, but in Julian's day the statement might have endangered her life. Her confidence in the Holy Spirit as her teacher and

in the inner light thus bestowed – “With the help of mercy and grace, we know and trust our light quite deliberately” (Ch. 83) – might also have gotten her in serious trouble, for the Church was alarmed by individual opinion and the too-great love of reason which led to it.

Independence of mind was not total or mindless in Julian, however. She knew and utilized much theology; evidence for this includes an item Reynolds gives – Julian’s classification of her visions as corporeal, imaginative and intellectual, a concept originating with Augustine.⁴⁵ In asking her readers to believe in her visions, Julian, like Christ’s first disciples, presented herself as an eye-witness of the central mysteries of salvation. She knew that faith needed no proof, yet like the disciples she felt it was important to tell us, “I saw with my own eyes” (Ch. 10). To this witness, Julian added every persuasive argument she knew, learned, or could develop. Just so, Aquinas wrote that the “natural reason should minister to faith as the natural inclination of the will ministers to charity”.⁴⁶ The ministry Julian offered was the eager return of her mind to the truths of faith and philosophy, and equally to the images of individual revelation. Again and again she considered them, now under one aspect, now under another, so that the divine light might have a human space, as it were, in which to shine.

3. Reason as a Source of Knowledge

Julian was unusual among English visionaries for the fact that she discussed her images.⁴⁷ Thouless notes that Julian developed concepts and propositions from images, a process he describes as translating images into words.⁴⁸ In fact, Duns Scotus had described a similar operation of the mind on the images produced by perception:

The sense-image of the object or phantasm . . . is not yet knowledge . . . The active intellect therefore is required to operate on the phantasm and ‘abstract’ or ‘multiply’ an intellectual image . . . which represents the universal determinations . . . of the object. The idea thus created by the power of the active intellect, illuminating the phantasm and making it intelligible, is

impressed on the potential intellect, which undergoes . . . the act of understanding.⁴⁹

It is startling how exactly Julian's response to the images of her visions paralleled this process, though they were never quite like perceived images.

Julian's respect for particular images would not have harmonized with earlier medieval philosophy. In those years knowledge was thought of as concepts and propositions, and theologians showed no real grasp of individual existing beings.⁵⁰ Duns Scotus' effort "to rehabilitate the individual in a position of epistemological respectability"⁵¹ was the right epistemology for Julian. Of course Duns Scotus realized that universals or concepts are necessary to understand particulars clearly,⁵² or to think we do, and Julian in her meditations endeavored to illumine her visionary images by the propositions of Christ's utterance or of theology or of metaphysics.

Aquinas thought reason could and should deduce the implications of revealed truths.⁵³ Julian was working in this confidence when she composed a conditional syllogism noted by Colledge and Walsh:⁵⁴

If the Blessed Trinity could have made the human soul better, fairer, nobler than he did, he would not have been fully satisfied with the making of our souls. He was fully satisfied. Therefore, he could not have made the human soul better, fairer, nobler than he did (Ch. 67).

The minor premise of this, of course, came from Genesis 1:31. In other passages as well, Julian treated revelation as material for logic.

It may seem surprising that she used the particular revelations made to her as material for logical analysis, but the cause may be the example of clerics. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, many European religious and didactic writers, especially preachers, used personal experiences for illustrations. As Welter shows:

The memories of the author resulting from his journeys, his contacts with all social conditions and his religious experiences gave birth to a form: the personal exemplum. This related to

events of the day, to the small facts of daily life, and could be dramatized at leisure to impress hearers, so that personal illustrations were especially in favor with popular preachers.⁵⁵

Another type of reasoning popular in the Middle Ages was the dialogue, especially the exchange of questions and answers. Julian enjoyed this form of reasoning with herself and with Christ, apparently from a natural pleasure in philosophical activity. Throughout the manuscript she identified clearly her questioning of herself or Christ and her reflections, as distinct from his questions, his statements, his answers. Her narrative of the visions shows that even during their progress, her mind by its urgent questioning played a determining role in their course (Chs. 29, 50). She can in no way be classed with those who oppose curiosity about the faith, for she both exercised and praised eagerness to learn (Ch. 10). She advised restraint only concerning matters which God had not revealed (Ch. 30).

Julian reasoned teleologically about the visions, claiming for example that "The purpose of this revelation was to teach our soul the wisdom of cleaving to the goodness of God" (Ch. 6). Her teleological interpretations are the most assured of the text, giving no idea of the process which generated them. Julian interpreted each vision according to its ultimate value for the human soul; she would then present her conclusion as God's intention. The teleological claims could be read as illuminations given through Wisdom, that Gift of the Holy Spirit which makes people aware of God's point of view and God's purpose.

The last example I will give of Julian's application of reason to the revelations (and I do not think my list is complete) is twofold: Julian both uses Augustinian exegesis and develops a wholistic interpretation to explain the exemplum of the Running Servant. By applying her mind in this way, she was able to gain knowledge from a revealed exemplum which had until then left her puzzled and dismayed. She seems to have been disturbed by the poverty of the lord in this story, perhaps because gospel parables about a lord describe him as wealthy. Or she may have been disturbed by the story's fusion of Christ with sinners. In Catholic sermons and devotions, Christ's identification with us has been carefully qualified to maintain his moral incomparability. But when Julian was

ready, “after twenty years (all but three months) from the time of the revelation” she “received inner enlightenment” to the effect that “It is for you to consider all the details and circumstances shown in the illustration, even if you think they are vague and unimportant” (Ch. 51). In doing so, she used Augustinian exegesis.

As Aquinas explained this method of interpretation, it recognized four layers of meaning in scripture. Aquinas defined the four levels as follows: words signifying things give the literal sense, which may be historical, causal, or analogical. Things signified by the words, when they also have a signification, give the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal and presupposes it. (This spirituality is probably why the method seemed so appropriate to Julian, considering the divine directive for her task.) The spiritual has a three-fold division: the allegorical sense, in which things of the Old Law signify things of the New Law; the moral sense, in which things related to Christ speak of eternal glory or of the next life.⁵⁶

Julian applied this method by retelling the exemplum several times, the first time as it was revealed (literal sense), the second time with the servant representing Adam and sinners, the third time with the servant representing Christ as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (allegorical sense). Then she returned to Everyman, describing this time Christ’s fall into death, which will eventually bring us to salvation (anagogical sense) by means of our joining Christ in his longing and desire to serve the Lord, as well as by “virtue, obedience, humility and patience on our part” (moral sense).

Julian could have learned the fourfold exegesis from any number of sources, as Lubac’s multivolume study of the subject shows;⁵⁷ it seems from the text that she herself thought of the interpretive principle of applying the revelations as a whole to problematic parts of it. The moment she mentioned the connection the exemplum had with the other visions, she was able to analyze the story again. This final time, Christ was thought of as the servant after the fall into the ravine, and she constructed a new ending, a fact which can easily escape the reader’s attention on a first reading. She managed this change by using materials from the other revelations, especially the first, in which Christ suffered but was glorified and joined the Trinity in bliss (Ch. 52).

A skeptic may argue that Julian rejected whatever she was shown

that had an unhappy ending, and she might have done so. The knowledge she had to offer may be the knowledge of how to carry out such a project, how to counter the particular arguments of nightmare with the general arguments – not to denial, but of the whole story. She noticed, as some of her readers do not,⁵⁸ that her visions, taken as a whole, spent much more time on Christ's glory than on his suffering, and ended with his glory. Julian's position was, then, that it would be unreasonable to consider life entirely painful. This bringing one part of revelation to bear on another, and, especially, bringing the glorious mysteries to bear on the sorrowful, was characteristic of Julian's method of argument.

IV. THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

Characteristically, Julian acknowledged limitations on human knowledge, but answered each deficiency with an assessment of the knowledge we do have.

1. *Incompleteness*

She knew and mentioned more than once that the Beatific Vision or the direct sight of God is not possible in this life. She put it poetically and precisely:

What he is who is in truth Maker, Keeper, and Lover I cannot tell, for until I am essentially united with him I can never have full rest or real happiness; in other words, until I am so joined to him that there is absolutely nothing between my God and me (Ch. 5).

However, she did not identify the body as the barrier, as Aquinas did; instead, Julian pointed to our incomplete spiritual development, for if that were complete, we would be able to die. God has not finished making us worthy to see the divine glory (Ch. 46).

Julian understood very well that the impossibility of full, continuing happiness of mind in this life makes perseverance difficult.

She conceded that she could not understand the complete extent of Christ's meaning when he revealed his glory to her; nevertheless, and she presented this as an observation, "the joy I saw in that revelation surpasses all the heart could wish for or the soul desire" (Ch. 26).

2. *Discouragement*

A second limitation on our knowledge interferes, when we attempt to ameliorate our long wait by contemplation and study, for "we are so spiritually blind and weighed down by our mortal flesh and murky sin [one cause from Aquinas and one from Duns, but applied to contemplation rather than to the Beatific Vision] that we cannot clearly see our Lord's blessed face. No, and because of this murkiness we have difficulty in believing and trusting his great love and our complete safety" (Ch. 72). The darkness of our mind causes us to turn our minds from God, so that we see ourselves out of relation to God's love and approval. Once we have made that error of framing, we begin to think how sinful we are (Ch. 47, 51):

Thus would our enemy set us back with this false dread of our wretchedness, and the pain he threatens us with. He means to make us so despondent and weary that we forget all about the lovely, blessed sight of our everlasting Friend. (Ch. 76)

The cure for discouragement is knowledge.

One consoling thought she offered those suffering discouragement, was that God has limited our knowledge of the repugnance of sin. The answer is to look for an encouraging truth to cling to, preferably one closely related to whatever has demoralized us. In the case of despair over our sinfulness, she summed up the truths God wills us to know as four:

- (i) that he is the ground of our life and existence; (ii) that he protects us by his might and mercy all the time we are in sin among the enemies out to wreck us . . . (iii) how courteously he protects us, making us know when we are going astray; (iv) how

loyally he waits for us, with unvarying affection: he wants us to turn to him, uniting with him in love, as he is with us (Ch. 78).

Julian emphasized throughout that these truths are knowable now, not reserved for the next life. The first, she garnered from philosophy; the second, she developed by questioning God about sin; the third, she derived from God's treatment of her lapse of faith before the sixteenth revelation; the fourth, she developed by her exegesis of the exemplum of the Running Servant.

3. Other Human Imperfections

Less dangerous limitations to our religious knowledge than despair were other limitations resulting from human imperfection. First, we consider some events only from the human perspective, but if we would think of God's presence in all deeds and his loving providence, we could avoid making many depressing judgments. Second, our limited experience of suffering and self-abnegation prevents our wholly understanding that of Christ (Chs. 22). Third, our inability to deal with contradictions in the faith is a serious limitation (Ch. 45). Fourth, the length of time it takes us to develop knowledge delays our understanding of ourselves. She wrote that we cannot know ourselves until the very last moment of our lives, when pain and woe end (Ch. 46).

4. "Not Shows"

Of ambiguous importance to Julian among limitations on human knowledge was that God has chosen not to reveal everything he might. This refusal Julian felt we should accept lovingly, as his right. But when frustration over our ignorance interferes with our peace of mind, she recommended that we turn to love and trust (Ch. 30). Ignorance at least leaves something for us to learn after death (Ch. 32). In addition, we really ought to take note of the fact that God wants to relieve our ignorance and to reveal as much of what we want to know as will help us now or contribute to the fullness of our joy in heaven (Ch. 34–35).

Even on a first reading, and more so on close reading, the “not shown” is dramatic in Julian’s narrative, and significant in her commentary. She used the phrase to refer to features of Church teaching which she expected or wanted very much to see revealed and did not, or which others later asked her if she had seen, but which she did not see. I have found twenty-four such passages. An example of these omissions is that of any mention of the responsibility of the Jews for Christ’s death. Instead she was shown her own responsibility to be faithful till death (Ch. 34). Some of the omissions seem to have been mentioned to ensure that her argument would be seen as orthodox and herself as deferent to God. A greater number, however, challenged the theologies of other teachers, a valiant habit of medieval thinkers, in view of the Church’s self-appointment as judge of the joust. In the case of Nicholaus of Autrecourt and others, the Church assigned penalties for propositions that could be interpreted as working against principles of faith. An example of one of Julian’s omissions which would be a major omission from the Thomistic system, was her not being shown that angels serve as God’s ministers, “as clerics tell” (Ch. 80).

Many of the not-showns support Julian’s relegation of sin to secondary importance by comparison to God’s love. For example, Catherine of Siena saw the damned, but Julian saw only the devil as damned (Ch. 33). In fact, there were thirteen of these omissions. It may be that God wished her to revise her understanding by reducing the importance of certain features of Church teaching in her overall attitude. Here I think Julian deserves credit for having a full-fledged spirit of debate.

Of the not-showns, the most important for a study of epistemology is the delay in receiving the full meaning of the Running Servant exemplum for nineteen years and nine months, and even then, being told from on high that it was her responsibility to analyze the story (Ch. 51). Apparently she had been taught all too well the lesson of submission to instruction, so that when this revelation seemed heterodox, she could not allow herself to examine it by the light of reason. Should anyone accuse her of heresy, as anchoress Matilda of St. Peter’s, Leicester, was accused,⁵⁹ Julian could protect herself by mentioning her delay, as well as the divine origin of her final decision to go ahead. Both these events spoke for her humility before God.

Most of the other omitted items, especially the omission of Christ's actual death (Ch. 21), a passage to my knowledge unique in all Catholic writing, were related to Julian's controlling theme of knowledge as the means to hope. What God chose not to reveal to Julian was intended to encourage lay trust in the divine mercy, lay reasoning about divine teachings, and the safety of a laywoman's text in the tumult of medieval controversy. These three services would advance our salvation. This revealing by not revealing is an appropriate parody, at the same time, of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. *On the Value of Knowledge*

Julian intended, judging from a study of her emphasis on the value of knowledge for religious advancement, to make a case for the spread of education. She indicated her intention by bringing the point into the beginning and end of her manuscript and mentioning it in at least 28 passages (Chs. 3, 86).

Julian held that knowledge of God results in love, that knowledge is necessary to love God, that knowledge is characteristic of divine love and that knowledge is among the gifts God's love gives us. According to Julian, knowledge stimulated a range of activities – analysis, doubt, synthesis, appreciation, compassion, assurance. Confronting contradictions would not result in doubt, but would lead to increasing faith and peace (Ch. 83). For Julian, the value of a growing knowledge of religion was therefore in its constructive power.

2. *On Julian's Influence*

One document from Julian's lifetime attests the influence of her epistemology – *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Kempe visited Julian at her anchorhold, talking with her about the trials Margery was undergoing in her efforts to obtain clerical approval for her life. Kempe recorded that Julian taught her to judge her spiritual actions herself. Julian explained that she could use two tests of goodness:

the actions must be “not against the worship of God and profit of her Christian peers”.⁶⁰ Until this approach was taught her, Kempe had been upset by ecclesiastical implications that women were unholy and by verbal abuse heaped on her personally by clerics.⁶¹ Julian’s solution replaced reliance on social authority by individual knowledge. In a similar vein Julian had written, “With the help of mercy and grace, we know and trust our light quite deliberately, and with it we go forward intelligently and firmly” (Ch. 83).

Of later influence, little study has been made. McCaslin studies the circumstances of T.S. Eliot’s inclusion of phrasing from Julian in “Four Quartets” (1942).⁶² Bradley calls attention to Julie Norwich,⁶³ a character in Annie Dillard’s *Holy the Firm*, a philosophical work published in 1977. Most commentators argue from the relatively small number of surviving manuscripts that *The Book of Showings* was not popular, although the opposite conclusion could be drawn. The small number of manuscripts may indicate that all copies were worn out, or that male scribes did not want to copy manuscripts by women. Or the appearance of the longer version at a time when vernacular translation of Scripture was under such hot attack might have stopped its circulation. Another argument against Julian’s having had much influence could be the interruptions of official tradition occasioned by the Reformation, Puritan rule, and the Enlightenment, when Catholic religious works were avoided except when a clergyman brought one out without the author’s name and with Catholic phrases deleted. The “most well-read, the most intelligent, and the most repulsive of the Restoration Anglican divines,” Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, attacked Cressy’s 1670 edition of the revelations as “Religious madness, . . . canting and enthusiastic”. His review would have worked against Julian’s acceptance by Anglicans at that time, for he wondered “to what end such a book were published among us, unless it were to convince us of this great truth, that we have not had so great Fanaticks and Enthusiasts among us, but they have had greater in the Roman Church”.⁶⁴

3. *On a Further Research Agenda*

Many questions about Julian remain unanswered. Were there other opponents of anti-intellectualism in religion during Julian’s

lifetime? How does Julian's analysis of virtues relate to the pursuit of religious knowledge? How does Julian develop the ideas of "contemplation" and "wisdom", "showing" and "understanding" in *The Book of Showings*? What are the mental corollaries of her biomedical symptoms? She presents a series of conclusions; how do they compare to one another? What were the Dominicans preaching in Norwich at the time, and what was the Franciscan course of study there? How do the epistemologies of Duns Scotus and Occam (in the complete primary texts) compare with Julian's?

4. Summary

Julian thought of knowledge as a set of propositions or understandings which described reality reliably, if at times dimly or partially. She was convinced that we could know with certainty that God loves us, wants to save our souls, and will do so. She offered, as a model to her readers, her intellectual behavior during her visions and after; she applied human reason to the solution of religious problems with the help of revealed truths. She held that images given in visions or in meditation, which moderns usually attribute to the unconscious, came from God and were a significant source of understanding. The optimism which inspired her epistemology as a whole also inspired her remarks on the value of the knowledge of God for human progress and happiness. In this regard as in others, her ultimate argument was that God wills us to know.

NOTES

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23. Conrad Pepler, O.P., *The English Religious Heritage*. (London: Blackfriars, 1958) 306.
24. Pelphrey, *op. cit.*, p. 78–79.
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26. Pelphrey, *op. cit.*, p. 39–40.
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30. Deryk Hanshell, "A Crux in the Interpretation of Dame Julian," *The Downside Review* (April 1974): 80.
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10. Catherine of Siena

CORNELIA WOLFSKEEL

I. BIOGRAPHY

Caterina da Siena or Caterina Benincasa was born in 1347¹ or at an earlier date in the Fonta Branda quarter in Siena and died April 29, 1380, in Rome. She was the daughter of the dyer Jacopomo Benincasa and his wife Lapa. Catherine is considered the greatest Italian mystic of the 14th century. She took a great part in the political and church affairs of her time. Her many letters to prominent laity and clergy evidence her influence.² Her letters are the best source of information about her life and personality, but little is known of her childhood. The so called *Miracoli*³ dating from 1374 tell us something about her life, but not too much. Many documents containing stories of her life appeared following her death in 1380. Raimondo da Capua, a Dominican priest and Catherine's spiritual advisor from 1374 until her death started writing the *Legenda Major*, the *Vita Caterinae Senensis*, shortly after Catherine's death. He finished this work in 1395. Tomasso della Fonte and Bartolomeo Dominici of San Domenico in Camporeggi, Siena, composed a treatise about Catherine, some fragments of which are found in the so-called *Supplementum* (*Supplement of the Life of St. Catherine*) by Father Tomasso Caffarini⁴ who was instrumental in her canonization three decades after her death.⁵ The works written about Catherine during that period should be consulted cautiously, for most were written to support the move for canonization. This is also true of the *Legenda Major*, written by Raimondo da Capua⁶ which Tomasso Caffarini shortened to the *Legenda Minor* during the period 1412–1417. The *Miracoli*, a biography composed by an anonymous Florentine author between May and October 1374, is a writing that

has to be considered with the same scientific caution as the *Legenda Major* because of the author's obvious tendencies to write hagiography. The exact date of Catherine's birth is uncertain. The date of her death in 1380, however, is mentioned by Marchionne di Cappello Stefani in a chronicle of Siena and by Donato di Neri, another chronicler, as well.

Catherine had her first vision as a young girl according to the *Miracoli*.⁷ The *Legenda Major* I, ch. 2, par. 8, 31 gives a different version of the vision from that reported in the *Miracoli*. When Catherine joined the order of San Domenico as a tertiary, she did not enter a convent, but remained at her parents's home, living as a recluse. Her cell should, she said, not be made of wood or stones, but only "del cognoscimento de se medimo" (of self knowledge).⁸ Catherine was a recluse while at home, but travelled frequently.⁹ In later years she also travelled on political and religious missions to Pisa, Firenze, and Avignon. She became the center or "la mamma" of a spiritual "famiglia,"¹⁰ to which many lay and religious persons belonged; and although she was a spiritual mother to her friends, she was hated and envied by those who wanted to discredit her piety. When the Dominican Order¹¹ held an assembly in Firenze in 1374, the General Head of the order, Elias of Toulouse, summoned Catherine to appear in court.¹² She was successfully defended by her spiritual guide, the Dominican Fra Angelo Adimari, according to a 14th century manuscript from S. Maria Novella.

Catherine had no formal education or training, and was illiterate at the time she became a tertiary. Later, miraculously, she learned to read. The bull of her canonization says that her doctrine was infused and not acquired, yet her writings demonstrate a solid knowledge of Augustinian philosophy and of Scripture.

Catherine gave many sermons and penitential homilies¹³ and was reported to instill repentance in those who heard her. Pope Gregory XI provided special apostolic letters allowing Raimondo da Capua and two of his fellow priests to absolve those who came to Catherine and wanted to confess. This story illustrates her special influence in the Church. Margarita Albana Mignaty¹⁴ notes that this was a matter never heard of in the history of the Church, which never allowed women to become priests. Catherine's letters¹⁵ stress the importance of Christian charity which she herself practised by

nursing the sick, particularly during the plague years of 1374 and 1375.

Catherine's influence increased after she received the stigmata in the Church of Santa Cristina in Pisa, on April 1, 1375. She had left Siena for Pisa after the plague ended earlier that year, moved to do so by a vision of Christ¹⁶ who ordered her not to hesitate any longer "for great honour of His name and great glory would follow and many souls would be won." During her stay in Pisa at the house of Gherardo Buoconti she promoted the idea of a new crusade.¹⁷ Her concern for "il santo e dolce passaggio" (the holy and sweet journey) was very great. Her letters to her lady companions in Siena, and especially her letter to Monna Paola and her other pupils in Fiesole¹⁸ suggest that Catherine might have considered joining the Crusade herself. The Pope had already written to the Dominicans, Franciscans, and to Raimondo da Capua, that all who wished to go to the Holy Land should register their names.¹⁹ Many women in Firenze were interested in a crusade. Don Giovanni delle Celle, a hermit of Vallombrosa tried to convince these women that their participation in a crusade would be foolish, and he blamed Catherine for her efforts at recruitment.²⁰ Catherine expanded her recruitment efforts and wrote to many prominent figures including the Regent of Sardes, Queen Elisabeth of Hungary, and Queen Giovanna of Naples to attempt to raise an army. Pope Gregory XI considered a crusade a way to unify all European Christians and thus make peace amongst them. Raimondo da Capua tells us that during her visit to the Pope in Avignon in 1376, Catherine spoke about a new crusade with the Pope.²¹

Catherine went to the papal court in Avignon²² in 1376 with Bartolomeo Dominici, Stefano Maconi,²³ three brothers of the house of Buoconti,²⁴ Fra Felice da Massa,²⁵ an Augustinian hermit, and three women of the tertiary order of San Domenico. Raimondo da Capua and others soon joined her. Catherine impressed the Pope and his court. Three prelates had thought her to be a deceiver, but when they visited her and spoke with her about theological matters, they admitted that she was illuminated by the Holy Spirit.²⁶ Raimondo da Capua, who acted as Catherine's interpreter (she did not understand the Pope's Latin) reports that Catherine tried to make peace between the Pope and the city of Firenze. According to Raimondo da Capua, she was successful to the extent that the Pope

was willing to attempt a peace. However, when official Florentine ambassadors later arrived in Avignon, they chose not to avail themselves of Catherine's intercession, not believing that the Pope had authorized her to negotiate the peace. Therefore, in spite of her courage and initiative, the situation remained unchanged.

Gregory XI was also involved in the war between France and England, in addition to waging war against Firenze. As a pretext for postponing the crusade he told Catherine that a suitable commander was needed. Catherine took the initiative, and approached the Duke of Anjou,²⁷ the Duke of Milano, Bernabo Visconti (an enemy of the Pope), Tommaso d'Alviano,²⁸ a condottiere (leader of a mercenary army) and even Charles V, King of France. But the political climate in Europe prevented mounting a crusade at that time.

In 1377 Pope Gregory XI returned to Italy as Catherine had wished, but his return did not bring peace. The war between the Italian cities continued, as did Papal involvement in the war. Catherine became his advisor upon his return to Rome. She was critical of his behavior, seeing him as more concerned with political power than with his spiritual duties. She faulted his selection of priests recommended by sovereigns upon whom his political interests depended.²⁹ She reproached the Pope in increasingly harsh letters; nevertheless, Gregory appointed her ambassador to Firenze in 1378, at the request of some Florentine statesmen.³⁰ But even Catherine's many powerful Florentine friends could not protect her against the anti-clerical party. She lectured before the Council of the Capitani di Parte Gualfe who desired peace,³¹ recommending that those who opposed peace be excluded from city government.³² The Capitani di Parte Gualfe began the "ammonizione" of the anti-clerical party shortly thereafter. The Pope's death coincided with Catherine's visit to Firenze. Even her powerful friends could not protect her from public animosity and the rioting which broke out in June of 1378. When the rioters found her taking refuge with her friends in a garden, she pleaded for the safety of her companions, offering herself. Catherine's readiness for sacrifice (she hoped for martyrdom) was effective. The group was spared and there was a month's hiatus in the riots.³³ Then the Ciompi revolt broke out. Catherine's life was endangered, but she received protection from the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella, and from Adimari and

Strozzi in particular. At the end of July 1378, Urban VI, Gregory's successor, made peace with Firenze. Happy with the turn of events, Catherine thought that the time for the crusade she had long sought had come.³⁴

Catherine returned to Siena, resuming work on "*Il Dialogo*" which she had begun the previous December. She also continued to involve herself in Papal politics. Urban VI had been elected Pope in Rome on April 8, 1378, and was crowned July 18 of that year. Robert de Genève was elected Pope Clemens VII on the 20th September by French and Italian cardinals who brought the suspicious circumstances and procedures of the April election to light. Catherine wrote to Urban following the election of Clemens, declaring herself and her "famiglia" his allies. In October she travelled to Rome to see Pope Urbanus. Raimondo da Capua (*Leg. Maj.*, III, ch. 1, par. 333) says that Urbanus had invited Catherine. This is improbable in the light of the Pope's refusal of Catherine's frequent earlier requests for an audience. However, this time he did receive her. When she arrived, the Pope informed her that Raimondo da Capua had been chosen to organize a new crusade. However, Raimondo was unsuccessful because he was unable to enter France. Sent again the next spring, Raimondo shirked his duty, considering it beyond his power. Catherine, who had no idea of the political situation at this time wrote an angry, disappointed letter to Raimondo³⁵ in which she considered his failure the result of her sins.

Although she was disappointed in Urbanus' failure to have a successful crusade mounted, she continued to devote herself to his cause. She had been unsuccessful in Firenze, in Siena, in Perugia and in Naples. Catherine had lost the political influence she had once had. But she remained in Rome until her death, witnessing, to her sorrow, a Papal court, like its Avignon court before, that was little more than a center of political intrigue. Catherine continued giving unappreciated advice to Urbanus, who welcomed her prayers, but not her criticism of his papacy. Catherine did not live to see the Church reformed as she wished. Her health failed and an illness which lasted for several months ended with her death. In her letter to Raimondo da Capua of February 15, 1380, Catherine tells her confessor her feelings and spiritual experiences, which she called the great mysteries of God. She mentions a spiritual experience of January 29, 1380 – the liberation from the fear of the devil and the

assurance that she would not be damned. She tells Raimondo her concern for her “famiglia” and asks him to take care of it. Raimondo, Fra Bartolomeo Dominici, Fra Tomasso della Fonte, and Master Giovanni Tantucci are instructed to use her writings to the honour of God. Barducci,³⁶ her secretary, describes Catherine’s final days, her pain and suffering as well as her final joy.³⁷ She died speaking the words of her Saviour, “Father I commend my soul and my spirit into Thine hands.” Catherine was granted the title of doctor ecclesiae on October 4, 1970 under the pontificate of Paul VI.

II. DOCTRINE OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

1. *Love and Free Will*

Catherine had one goal in life, the love and honour of God, which included the love of our neighbour.³⁸ This is the message of her writings. She felt sure to be guided by the light of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ In her opinion, people who were deprived of that light could not travel during their pilgrimage on earth. Although Catherine lived somewhat later than St. Thomas Aquinas, her doctrine is free of any traces of Aristotelian Thomism or Neo-Scholasticism. Fawtier⁴⁰ considers Catherine’s doctrine Augustinian, but missing the doctrine of predestination. We think that Fawtier is right although we think that there is more Augustinian thought in Thomas’ way of thinking than Fawtier apparently assumes. Catherine never speaks of God as the First Mover, as did Thomas⁴¹ influenced by Aristotle in *Metaphysica* XII, ch. 7. Catherine’s concept of God also differs from that of the German mystic Eckhart. Her writings evidence that she was convinced that God in His own nature does not need us,⁴² whereas Eckhart established a mutual dependence of the world on God and of God on the world. According to Catherine, the only reason why God created us was His love for us. Catherine (in her *Orazioni*) emphatically says that God knows every human being individually, and that He did so even before He created mankind. In her concept of God we do not find the doctrine that the Platonic Ideas are in the Mind of God, as Augustine and Thomas taught. We have to prove our love of God by our love of

our neighbour (*Lettera* Misciatelli 284; 224; 185), Catherine says. To love God and his neighbour, however, a human being has to be free and to have free choice. Catherine stresses the fact that man is given free will and free choice. In fact free will is that faculty of the soul that is not affected by original sin (*Or.* 7 and 8). God respects the freedom of choice in us. He has created us without us, but He is not going to save us without us (*Dialogue* 23).⁴³ It is impossible to conciliate this way of thinking with the doctrine of predestination as it was conceived by St. Thomas.⁴⁴ Catherine's way of thinking is more similar to that of Augustine in one of his *Sermons*.

There will be no justice of God in you without your will. There is no will except yours, but there is no justice except the justice of God.⁴⁵

However, we must keep in mind that in Augustine's opinion, every human will is reigned and dominated by God. Catherine, however, does not accept Augustine's doctrine of predestination and consequently stresses human free will.⁴⁶ Divine grace is offered to mankind in Christ according to Catherine. We can take it or leave it. God is not responsible if people go to hell at the day of the last judgement. Human free will is so strong that neither God nor the devil can do anything contrary to it. Even Mary was asked for her consent when God wanted to unify divine and human nature in Christ (*Or.* XI). Human free will has a central position in the process of salvation (*Or.* XI; *Lettere* passim). God wants our salvation, because in His goodness He wants the best for us. We are entitled to love God on the basis of our freedom of choice. We are also entitled to show our love of God by loving our neighbour. Darkness has come into our soul by sin. Our wrong self love (*il amore proprio*), which is a consequence of sin, is a darkness which generates more darkness.⁴⁷ We have to come to knowledge of our own souls. This is a necessary condition for coming to the knowledge of God. If one does not know his own soul, one does not know God. If one does not know God, one does not love God and consequently is not capable of any love at all. There is a connection between the knowledge of oneself and the knowledge of God and also between the latter and the love of God.⁴⁸ The same thought is found in a pseudo-Augustinian writing, the *Soliloquia*.⁴⁹ Catherine

is convinced that we shall know our own misery when we have come to know our own soul. We have to become inhabitants of "the cell of our own soul" in order to become humble by the knowledge of our misery.⁵⁰ We have to know ourselves in order that we may come to know and love God. We have to kill our own wrong love of ourselves, "the old man" of St. Paul's *Letters*. Catherine was convinced that by its own nature our soul loves God (*l'anima per propria natura ama Dio*),⁵¹ but that wrong self-love leads the soul astray. However, God does not want anything else but our salvation (*Lettera Misciatelli* 97, written to Monna Paola in the spring of 1379). It is the incarnated Word, Christ, who has awakened and opened the selfish heart of man by the power of His great love at the cross (*Lettera Misciatelli* 108, written to Monna Giovanna da Capo). It is the love of Christ that turns "il amore proprio" into the love of God in us, for God draws us by love, not by force (*Or.* 19). We are all stained by the stain of original sin (*la macchia del peccato originale*), but Christ has paid for our debts by the sacrifice of His blood (*Dial.* 14) on the cross. Baptism liberates us from original sin.⁵² This means that divine grace is offered to us in baptism.⁵³

2. *Freedom and Grace*

In baptism we are set free to accept or to refuse God's mercy when we come to the age of discernment. Catherine stresses the fact that divine grace is offered to all mankind.⁵⁴ All people of the past, the present and the future are offered the grace of participating in the mercy of God, for the blood of Christ is shed for all people.⁵⁵ God has unified Himself with us by descending from the great highness of His divinity into the baseness and the mud of our humanity (*Orazione V*).⁵⁶ He made Himself known to us in Christ. When we consider this great love of God, we cannot but love God and love everything else for His sake. So our will consequently becomes unanimous with the will of God.⁵⁷ God conquers us by love, in Catherine's opinion (*Or.* IV). She clearly says that God is love by essence (*Lettera Misciatelli* 146). He draws us towards Himself by love, not by force (*Or.* 19). He knew and loved every individual human being from eternity. He therefore offered mankind salvation and eternal life even before human life on earth had begun (*Lettera*

Misciatelli 96). Since God is love and all His actions are actions out of love, we are made by God out of love (*Dial.* 82). The fact that God knew that we should sin did not prevent Him from making us, for He loved us as we could be in our freedom, to wit, saved and accepting His grace. If the love of God should fail, we would disappear (*Lettera* Misciatelli 246). It is our duty to love God because of His great love. God does not need our love, but He deserves it (*Lettera* Misciatelli 35). We have to love our neighbour, for God considers our love of our neighbour a service to Himself. It also is a guarantee that we truly love Him (*Dialogo* ch. 11). Our true love of God implies our love of our neighbour. Catherine stresses the importance of charity. It is charity and the killing of the wrong “amore proprio,” that is the will of God⁵⁸ and not the torture of the body and an exaggerated asceticism.⁵⁹

3. *Virtue and Salvation*

Catherine was told by Eternal Truth that she should base herself on love of virtue, not on love of penance, for otherwise she would feel deprived of God, when deprived of penance by His eternal blood.⁶⁰ It was Christ who paid for our debts, since God, the Father Himself, could not do penance (*Or.* X)⁶¹ and mankind could not pay for its debts either. Christ is the bridge between God and mankind, built when He was crucified.⁶² If we want to make our way to God, we must go through this bridge. We must cooperate by free choice with God’s grace offered to us (*Or.* 14). In *Or.* 13 Catherine meditates on man’s original destination and his actual situation. Man (man’s soul) was originally made from God’s own mind to be “a flower in the garden of God,” distinguished by the three faculties of the soul (1. memory and consciousness, 2. intelligence and 3. will).⁶³ These faculties refer to the three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Man lost this privilege through his own fault. The garden of God was closed to man after Adam’s fall. Therefore God made the Word the doorkeeper of His garden, for the Word was God and man, which was a necessary condition to open the garden of God. Divinity could not open the door of grace without humanity, because it was humanity that had closed this door. On the other hand humanity could not open the door of grace

either, for the works of humanity would have been finite. However, the guilt of mankind had to be redeemed. Christ, who was God and man, paid the debts of mankind through His suffering on the cross. Christ could redeem the guilt of mankind, because His humanity was always united to His divinity. This made His work infinite.

4. *The Importance of Intelligence and Reason*

The image of God in man (*Or.* 17), which relates man to God was damaged in the fall. However it was not completely destroyed. Man retained free will, but he is no longer aware that he is God's image. He needs the grace of God and divine illumination to reveal his own soul to him (*Or.* 4). This light is offered man in baptism. If man accepts this light of belief which God offers him in baptism, man's natural light of reason will function well. Man will become aware that God is in him and he in God, for he will be able to realize the new condition through the mercy of the Trinity. He will be set free from wrong self-love and he will be more enlightened (*Or.* 21). However if man does not accept God's grace, he will not change his condition. His intelligence will be "covered by the darkness of guilt." If man rejects God's grace he may even become bestial by losing the gift of the natural light of reason (*Or.* 21). However the soul that is recreated and illuminated by the Divine Word will have a reciprocal conformity⁶⁴ with the Trinity because of the union God has made in man (*Or.* 21). This conformity with God given in the three faculties (*potenze*) of the soul, is a bondage of love, which necessarily includes the love of the neighbour. It is a foretaste of heaven, a shining of the soul in the divine light, because human will is now united to the will of God. The illuminated soul will achieve greater knowledge of God and of itself, which implies greater love of God and of the neighbour (*Or.* 18). It is in the light of God, who is the real object of the soul's love, that man has to use the light of his reason. Man must be very careful not to lose it. This might happen if he were to surrender himself to sensual love (*Or.* 5) and sensuality. Since man's free will is not taken away from him by the fall, man is free to accept God's grace or to follow the *legge perversa* (law of perversity). Man's free will is so strong, that neither God nor the devil can do anything against it, if man himself does not

wish to (*Or.* 7). God wants man's salvation, but man has to accept it by free choice. It is Christ who paid for man's debts, but man has to accept His grace.

5. *The Role of Divine Providence*

Catherine is convinced of God's providence. Her book "*Il Dialogo*" is the testimony of this belief in God's providence. God does everything out of love for the well-being of man, whom He created in His image and likeness. God provided for fallen mankind in general through the law given to Moses and in sending the prophets. He provided for the payment of the debts of fallen mankind through the incarnation of the divine Word (*Dial.* 136). His only motive is His love for mankind and His desire for the salvation of mankind. God also provides for the needs of every human being in particular, in better and in worse. Sometimes the just have to accept insults and slander from the wicked, because God permits the sinners these sinful actions either to test the virtue of patience of the just or to make the sinners aware of their sinfulness (*Dial.* 137). God is not the source of the malice of the sinners – evil is non-being and not created by God – but He makes use of it for the well being of mankind. God does everything providentially. His providence may be hidden to those who have only a base understanding, but it is clear to those who consider it with "the eyes of a mind enlightened by faith." God in His goodness and love for His creatures endows the souls of the just more fully with spiritual gifts when they have renounced the world and its pleasures. He becomes their spiritual provider and sometimes He even materially provides for them with the special providence of His mercy. Their souls receive the supernatural light from the Holy Spirit when they make good use of the natural light of reason God has given them (*Dial.* 142).

God provides for His servants who have put their trust in Him. All this providence is for their soul and for the good of their soul to make it grow in the light of faith (*Dial.* 14). He always helps his servants in their bodily needs. They receive His help perfectly or imperfectly according to their own perfection or imperfection. They may be poor, but they are never beggars, for God fulfills their every need.

6. *The Perfection of the Soul*

Catherine elaborately dealt with the perfection of the soul. The highest perfection the soul can reach is the union with God, which – as St. Paul understood in *Rom.* 7, 24, 23 – is unbearable for a soul, still enchained by the body, because the soul's union with God is always more perfect than its union with the body (*Dial.* 80).⁶⁵ Those who have reached the union with God are “clothed into the wedding garment of charity, adorned with many true virtues,” being united with God through love and having completely conformed their will to the will of God (*Dial. Prol.*). They are characterized by the absence of fear of suffering when they preach the teaching of Christ crucified, showing great charity to their neighbours (*Dial.* 74). They are endowed with the gift of always feeling God's grace, even when God has withdrawn the union with them from their souls, because their souls cannot constantly bear the experience of this union with Him. Their souls have come to perfect love. Like Christ they always work for the salvation of souls.

The soul's way of perfection is the way of climbing “the bridge” raised up between God and humanity through the crucifixion of Christ. Christ crucified is the living bridge between heaven and earth (*Dial.* 22). This bridge has three stairs, the nailed feet, the heart and the mouth of Christ crucified. Three stages of spiritual development correspond to these three stairs: 1. the stage of affections which carry the soul like the feet carry the body; 2. the stage when the soul is filled with great love, having seen Christ's love in His heart; 3. the stage when the soul has found peace after its struggling against sin (*Dial.* 26), and from where it immediately passes to the fourth stage of spiritual progress (*Dial.* 76–78). The three stairs also symbolize the three faculties (*potenze*) of the soul (*Dial.* 52sq) which always work together (*Dial.* 52). The soul is made through love and love is the stuff it is made of. Therefore the soul always loves something and wants to love something. So it is affection that moves intelligence and when intelligence is aroused by affection, it wants the soul to love something good and tries to give the soul something good to love, and consequently memory will hold on to this good. If the soul has gotten rid of wrong self love, the root of all evil, and if its faculties are united in love of God and the neighbour, the soul can climb the bridge. This is the way of

ordinary love possible for all souls, for God does not ask anything else but love (*Dial.* 55). Some souls climb perfectly, others imperfectly. Those who climb perfectly, bring forth true virtues, loving God for His own sake, not for the comfort He gives. They follow the commandments and the counsels of God, not out of fear of punishment. They are given an enlightenment that is beyond the light of reason and that of faith, sufficient for those who want to go the way of “ordinary love” (*carità comune*).

7. *The Doctrine of Tears*

The way of perfection is closely linked with Catherine’s doctrine of tears (*Dial.* ch. 88–97). There are five kinds of tears, corresponding to the stages of the soul.

1. First of all there are the tears of damnation, the tears of evil people.
2. Secondly there are the tears of fear, the tears of those who have risen up from sin out of fear of punishment.
3. Third are the tears of those who have risen up from sin and are beginning “to taste God.”

Those three kinds of tears which, like all tears, are coming from the heart, are still imperfect tears.

4. The fourth kind of tears is the kind of tears that is shed by those who have attained perfection in loving their neighbours and love God without any self interest. This is the kind of perfect weeping.
5. The fifth kind of tears which is linked to the fourth, is the kind of sweet tears shed with great tenderness.

The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth kind of tears are tears of life.

When the soul begins to practice virtue, it starts losing fear, for it knows that fear of punishment is not enough to gain eternal life. The soul now sheds the third kind of tears, having reached the second stage of spiritual development (*see Dial.* ch. 58). When the soul grows in self knowledge, it conceives a contempt of itself in true humility, and consequently a greater knowledge of God and His

goodness, which implies love and compassion for the neighbour (see *Dial.* 76). It considers it a glory to suffer patiently, but gladly for the sake of God's name. On the third stage of spiritual progress (mentioned as such in *Dial.* 76–77) the soul, having attained perfection and constancy in loving the neighbour, weeps out of charity for God and the neighbour. Those tears are tears of perfect love (fourth kind of tears, *Dial.* 89). When the soul continues making spiritual progress by “travelling through the bridge,” it reaches the stage of the union with God (the fourth stage, *Dial.* 78), where it experiences God as a “peaceful sea” (*Dial.* 89). On this level of spiritual perfection the soul is both happy and sorrowful. It is happy because of the union with God it has experienced. It is sorrowful because it sees God's love and goodness offended. The tears shed on this spiritual level are sweet tears of charity (the fifth kind). Then the soul weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice, because it is “clothed with charity for its neighbours” (*Dial.* 89/90).

There are people who weep in well ordered love, but who have no physical tears (*Dial.* 91). Theirs is the weeping of “fire and of holy desire.” It is the way in which the Holy Spirit weeps, as St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans.⁶⁶ Catherine speaks of the soul's holy desire as of “an infinite thing.” Were it not, no virtue would have value for life, for God is infinite and wants to be served with what is infinite, and the soul has nothing infinite except its holy desire and charitable love. Once the soul is separated from the body and has reached its final goal, it is set free from suffering, but its holy desire is still there. Then it is even more filled with grace (*Dial.* 92).

8. *The Christian Virtues*

All virtues, such as humility, charity, patience, perseverance, courage, justice, obedience, temperance and self-chosen poverty are rooted in charity, which is the soul's fruit, when the soul has come to the knowledge and love of God through self-knowledge and humility (*Dial.* 144). All virtues are bound together and it is impossible to have one virtue without having them all. However, God gives the virtues differently to different people: to one person He gives charity as the primary virtue, to another justice, to another humility, to still another temperance. God gives the different virtues

to different people in such a way, that one virtue may be the source of all other virtues (*Dial.* 7). Every virtue and every vice is put into action by means of the neighbours (*Dial.* 6). Every sin committed by man against God is done by means of his neighbours (*Dial.* 7), because it deprives him of charity, which underlies every virtue. Man cannot love his neighbours, if he does not love God (*Dial.* 6), whereas man's love of his neighbours proves his love of God (*Dial.* 7-8).

9. Poverty as a Spiritual Virtue

To Catherine who took the vow of poverty herself, poverty meant following in fact, and not only in spirit, the counsels of Christ in order to achieve a greater spiritual perfection than could be achieved by just following the commandments (*Dial.* 47) in fact and the counsels only in spirit. Though Catherine considered poverty a great virtue, she did not judge those rich people who collected their riches in a righteous way. In her opinion, it was quite possible that people be rich and prosperous in their earthly life. She certainly did not consider this a crime (*Dial.* 151). However, rich people had to strip themselves spiritually of all attachment to their wealth, so that they did not possess their riches with "disordered love," but with "holy fear." If rich people who did not follow the counsels in fact, but only in spirit, possessed their riches with "holy fear," they would in fact become more distributors for the poor than possessors of their own riches. In Catherine's view, rich people had their own special task in this world: providing for the needs of the poor under God's guidance and providence.

Catherine lived in the second half of the fourteenth century. At the end of this century the ideal of absolute poverty preached in the 13th century by the early Franciscan order had not been totally abandoned in Europe, but it had certainly lost much of its influence on Christian people. The old Franciscan ideal was still followed by Giovanni Columbini, one of the members of Catherine's *famiglia*. Giovanni was a rich salesman, who, in 1360, gave his property to the poor. At the end of the 14th century, Giovanni Dominici of the order of St. Dominic rehabilitated the morality of wealth. He considered wealth a condition of life that some people could right-

eously achieve through the grace of God. With Giovanni, the order of St. Dominic voiced the feelings of many rich people and governments in the flourishing cities of Middle Italy. Self-earned riches were even considered a means to virtue.⁶⁷ They made people more self-assured than before. The profane ethics of the end of the 14th century are full of joy of this life on earth, which is considered a gift of God to be enjoyed.⁶⁸ The Church no longer resisted this altered mentality among laics.

10. *Suffering*

Catherine, living in a period when theology focussed on the humanity of Christ, His agony and suffering, deals with the subject of suffering in many passages of her writings. Self-chosen suffering is of no value in her view. Man is not allowed to make his own choice for suffering, but he has to accept all God-given suffering. His suffering has to be a suffering in "holy desire" (*Dial.* 12). God always sends suffering together with His grace to those who are passing through this life, "keeping to the bridge." To them, suffering is refreshing for it has no other purpose except their salvation. Those who are not "keeping to the bridge" when passing through this earthly life, also necessarily suffer and cannot escape their suffering through flight (*Dial.* 44). Evil people always suffer more than the just. Those who have attained perfect love do not only suffer with patience, but they also glorify in their suffering (*Dial.* 78). They are free of all fear of suffering when they preach the gospel.

III. THE WRITINGS OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

1. *Letters*

Many of *Le Lettere* are homilies on special subjects, such as patience (*Lettera* Misc. 151), true humility (*Lettera* Misc. 334; true humility has to include the feeling of self-dignity. Dignity does not consist in worldly honour), charity (*Lettera* Misc. 279: charity is the mother of all virtues) and the natural light of reason given to man to discern between right and wrong (*Lettera* Misc. 301).

Many *Lettere* deal with Catherine's ardent wish for reform of the Church (*Lettera* Misc. 206 to Pope Gregory XI; *Lettera* 270 to the Pope). In Catherine's opinion, the Church is the mystical body of Christ and the Pope is "Christ on earth." It is through the institution of the Church and its ministers to whom God trusted "the keys of heaven," that God provides for man's spiritual needs in Holy Communion and the other sacraments. In spite of all her criticism of the Church and its ministers, Catherine kept to this concept of the Church. She just wanted the Church to be internally reformed into the spiritual institution it was originally meant to be. She reproached the Pope and the ministers of the Church for having too much interest in worldly riches and power and for caring too little for the salvation of souls. Many of Catherine's *Lettere* written to eminent clergymen deal with the subject of the Church's reform.

2. *Il Dialogo*

Il Dialogo, simply called "my book" by Catherine herself, came to existence in the period 1377–1378.⁶⁹ It is a dialogue with God who, questioned by Catherine, instructs her and elaborately answers her questions. *Il Dialogo* is a testimony of God's providence and of the revelation of Holy Truth (= Christ). Raimondo da Capua (*Leg. Maj.* III. ch. 3) says that Catherine was forced to write "her book" by Holy Truth Himself, who revealed Himself to her, about two years before her death.

The text of *Il Dialogo* is preserved to us in codices, which are present in the Biblioteca Comunale of Siena. *Il Dialogo* was printed for the first time in Venice in the year 1472. Various editions followed in Italy in the centuries to come. It was edited by Gigli,⁷⁰ together with Catherine's other writings, in the eighteenth century. M. Fiorilli prepared an edition of *Il Dialogo* in the 20th century.⁷¹ *Il Dialogo* was normally edited according to a system of division of the contents into four treatises and 167 chapters, before Giuliana Cavallini⁷² edited the text according to a system of division of the contents into ten main themes, in the year 1968. (For reasons of quotation she also maintained the numbers of the chapters of the previous editions). The whole *Dialogo* is composed according to a system of demanding, answering and thanksgiving, in Cavallini's opinion. Cavallini, very unsatisfied with the previous way of edit-

ing⁷³ the text, used what she thought to be the underlying system of the *Dialogo*, as a key to understand the *Dialogo* and to discover its organic structure. Her effort was not without result. It became clear to her that the key she used actually revealed the organic structure and logical division of the contents of the *Dialogo*, as Catherine herself had meant it to be. Cavallini became convinced that the old division into four treatises, which had originally been the work of Onofrio Farri in the 16th century, had to be discarded. This revolutionary view of Cavallini was generally accepted by other scholars. Suzanne Noffke follows the thread of Cavallini in her beautiful English translation of *Il Dialogo*.⁷⁴ The ten main themes discovered by Cavallini are:

- I Prologue (ch. 1–2)
- II The way of perfection (ch. 3–12)
- III The Dialogue (ch. 13–25)
- IV The Bridge (ch. 26–87)
- V The Tears (ch. 88–97)
- VI The Truth (ch. 98–109)
- VII The Mystical Body of Holy Church (ch. 110–134)
- VIII Divine Providence (ch. 135–153)
- IX Obedience (ch. 154–165)
- X Conclusion (ch. 166–167)

(a) *ad I. Prologue*. The first two chapters introduce the main issues of the whole book: God's Truth and Love, and the dignity of the human being created in God's image and likeness, whose perfection is in the union with God. The work is placed in a setting within Catherine's life. Even petitions Catherine made are mentioned: for herself, for the reform of the Church, for the whole world, for the conversion of rebellious Christians, for divine providence in all things, and especially in regard to a particular case which seems to have troubled Catherine very much. (It is uncertain what this case really was).

(b) *ad II. The Way of Perfection*. In chapters 3 through 12, God instructs Catherine that every offense against Him, who is "infinite Good" demands infinite satisfaction. Man needs "infinite desire," that is, true contrition of the heart and love of God. The value of

suffering and penance is not in suffering or penance itself, but in the soul's desire. Neither desire nor any other virtue has value in life, except through Christ crucified. The way of perfection is the way of following Christ in His footsteps. This way of love of God necessarily implies love of our neighbours, for every virtue and every vice is committed by means of our neighbours. The soul needs discernment: true knowledge of itself and of God, which involves charity. (This part lacks a thanksgiving).

When commenting on the different main themes of *Il Dialogo* discovered by Cavallini, we must keep in mind that these themes are all interwoven and closely linked to each other. So "the way of perfection" is closely linked to the doctrine of the Bridge (= Christ), that of Truth (= Christ), that of Tears, and that of Obedience. "The way of perfection," which is the "way of following Christ in His footsteps" is elaborately worked out in connection with the other main themes. Catherine, dealing with the other themes, elucidates what this really meant. She is teaching her audience step by step. In chapters 3–12 she introduces the way of perfection. It becomes clear – and Catherine's discussion of the other themes will make it clearer – that this way of perfection is possible for all and certainly is not a privilege of clergymen, monks or nuns. Like St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Catherine identifies perfection with salvation. Bernard considered "perfectio" the soul's return to God through a purification of the heart given by God Himself and through the process of rehabilitation under God's guidance.⁷⁵ In Bernard's opinion, the perfection of man who is the image of God, is in the likeness to God. A conformity of will to the will of God must correspond with the image of God, which is imprinted in the nature of man. This conformity of will is the consequence of grace and at the same time of the free consent of the will. Such a movement of return to God, to man's model, as Bernard puts it, is fulfilled in charitable love. This concept of man's way to perfection as a return to God by God's grace and man's accepting of this grace is very similar to Catherine's concept of the way of perfection. We have already mentioned that in Catherine's doctrine charity underlies all virtues and necessarily belongs to the soul's way of perfection. Thomas Aquinas also considered the way of perfection that of love of God and neighbour. However, Thomas thought that this charitable love could grow if people kept the

commandments of Christ. In Thomas' view, people did not necessarily have to keep the counsels of Christ, as well as His commandments, in order to reach perfection. (Thomas considered keeping the counsels as well merely instrumental).⁷⁶ Catherine slightly differs from Thomas in this respect. She certainly does not consider it necessary that people keep the counsels in fact in order to attain salvation. Those who keep the commandments in fact, and the counsels in spirit only, will be saved in the end. They are those who are passing through earthly life in ordinary love (ch. 47). Catherine, however, strongly emphasizes the fact that people may attain a greater perfection if they keep the counsels of Christ not only in spirit, but in fact as well. Then they will pass through earthly life most perfectly. Keeping the counsels in spirit and in fact is essential to those who want to pass most perfectly, in Catherine's opinion. Her way of perfection certainly has been submitted to some Franciscan influence in this respect.⁷⁷ She obviously follows the Augustinian thread, when she says that the soul must first come to self-knowledge and knowledge of its own misery in order to attain knowledge of God. This process of internalization reminds us of Augustine's *Confessions*.

Knowledge of God is the necessary condition for love of God, which, according to Catherine, includes love of the neighbours. This stress laid on the intellectual aspect of man's conversion to God, which becomes more obvious in the way Catherine deals with the human soul in the following chapters of *Il Dialogo*, also indicates Augustinian influence. To Catherine, perfection first of all means a condition of the soul, but one that immediately and necessarily has practical consequences for the way people treat their neighbours. Catherine lays great stress on this aspect of the way of perfection. Her mysticism has a very great, and inherently practical impact. Her way of following Christ and of achieving great perfection is by means of the neighbour. According to Catherine, even in the final state of perfection when the soul experiences God as a peaceful sea, the soul is concerned with the salvation of the neighbour (ch. 89). In this respect Catherine differs from other Dominican mystics of her time, like Eckhart and Suso, whose mysticism is characterized by strong speculative tendencies.

(c) *ad III. The Dialogue*. Chapters 13 through 25 deal with three

petitions (partly a repetition of those enumerated before): 1, for mercy for the Church, 2, for mercy for the whole world, and 3, for mercy for an unnamed person (the “certain case”). God answers in correspondence to these petitions. The instruction leads up to the following doctrine: God explains that he has made Christ “the bridge” between heaven and earth. The redemptive blood of Christ sets man free from all his sins, original sin included, if man wants to accept by his own free choice, God’s grace offered to him in baptism. Those people who made their choice for a sinful life after they were redeemed are false Christians and enemies of God, worse than pagans. They deserve God’s punishment, but God, wanting the salvation of souls, will gracefully accept on their behalf the prayers and tears of His servants, who have a holy desire for the salvation of souls. God’s mercy is offered to the whole world, for He created everything, except sin. The unnamed person will have to make his own way “through the bridge,” accepting the suffering God grants him. Catherine thanks God (ch. 25) for His answers and courageously asks Him who are those who cross over the bridge, and those who do not. This question leads up to a new answer and instruction.

The concept that God’s grace is offered to all mankind reflects Catherine’s strong belief in the goodness and providence of God, whom (following Augustine in this respect) she elsewhere calls the Highest Good. She obviously is in accord with Augustine’s doctrine when she says that God did not create sin. Like Augustine she considers all moral evil non being. Catherine, however, certainly differs from Augustine when she speaks of God’s desire for the salvation of mankind and of His offering grace to all mankind. The absence of the doctrine of predestination we discussed above, undoubtedly underlies this concept. In Catherine’s opinion, God offers grace; the only thing man has to do is accept this grace in free choice. We will discuss man’s free will and free choice elaborately when commenting on “the Bridge.” Catherine pictures Christ Mediator as “the Bridge” between heaven and earth. This picture is part of Catherine’s highly figurative language.

(d) *ad IV. The Bridge.* The doctrine of the Bridge,⁷⁸ developed in chapters 26 through 87, is the most important part of the book. The Bridge was raised up, when Christ, who was God and man, was

crucified. Since man could not pay for his debts to God, and God, the Father could not do penance for the guilt of man, it was Christ, God and man, who had to pay for the debts of mankind through His blood. Christ is the Bridge between heaven and earth, between God and man. Were it not for the Bridge, there would be no salvation for mankind. No one could walk on that Bridge until Christ was raised up from the grave. The Bridge was raised high and it has steps to enable man to mount it more easily. Climbing the Bridge and keeping to it means following the teachings of Holy Truth (= Christ).⁷⁹

Those who pass through earthly life, not keeping to the Bridge, but going through the river beneath it, will drown in the end. They have "blinded the eye of their intelligence (ch. 46) with the infidelity they have drawn over it by their (wrong) self-love." At their baptism "the pupil of faith" was potentially given to the eye of their intelligence, but when they reached the age of discernment, they turned away from God and virtuous life and consequently lost the light of faith. They deluded themselves by their own free choice. They will consequently "drown themselves in the river." They could have been saved, if they had just followed the voice of their conscience instead of their sensuality.

Man has to choose whether he wants to go "through the Bridge" or "through the river." Some people cross the Bridge in ordinary love, others in perfect love. Those who travel in ordinary love keep the commandments of Christ, but they follow His counsels in spirit only, and not in fact. For instance: they need not be poor, but they must possess their riches without any attachment to them. They must lay down all wrong self-love. They must use the three faculties (1, memory and consciousness, 2, intelligence and 3, will) of their soul properly, conforming their will to God's will. They will then have climbed the three stairs.⁸⁰ Those who keep Christ's commandments and His counsels in fact as well as in spirit travel through the Bridge in perfect love. They go the way of "great perfection," loving God and their neighbour. The doctrine of the Bridge (summarized in ch. 87) is closely connected to the doctrine of tears. Catherine wanted to be instructed on tears for this reason.

Catherine uses the picture of Christ as the Bridge to express the Christian doctrine of salvation, according to which Christ is the only Saviour of fallen mankind. Christ as the Bridge is Christ

Mediator. Christ is the incarnate Word. He could pay off the guilt of mankind, because He was God and man. Were it not for His divinity, His work would not have had the "value of life." If we compare Catherine's doctrine of Christ as the Mediator between God and mankind with Augustine's statements in this matter,⁸¹ we have to notice some slight differences. Augustine considered Christ to be a mediator in His humanity, but not in His divinity. Christ in His humanity gave His life as a sacrifice to redeem the guilt of mankind.⁸² Catherine apparently assumes a much closer relationship between the two natures of Christ in the matter of the redemption of mankind by the sacrifice of His "eternal blood."⁸³ This in particular becomes clear from Chapter 110, where it is said:

So is this Word, my Son, His most gracious blood is a sun, wholly God and wholly human, for He is one thing with me and I with Him.⁸⁴

To Catherine, Christ, the Bridge is the incarnate word, whose blood brings salvation. As soon as the soul has passed through the narrow gate of the Word, immersed in His blood, it comes to me (God, the Father), the sea of peace" (ch. 131).

Another major difference with Augustine's doctrine of salvation is to be found in the way Catherine deals with human free will. We discussed the latter in the Part II, above. Man must accept God's grace in free choice. Man is capable of free choice, because man's will is the only one of the three capacities (*potenze*) of man's soul which is not affected by original sin. Augustine thought that both body and soul, including the will, were affected by original sin.⁸⁵ On the one hand, Augustine says that man is free, on the other he says that man is capable of nothing good except through the grace of God. He reconciles these apparently contradictory statements by means of his concept of God's domination of man's will. Augustine emphatically says in his later writing *De praedestinatione sanctorum*,⁸⁶ that every willing of man which is good, is preceded by God's grace, or is the fruit of God's grace. God is capable of changing the will of man. If man wants something which is morally good, it is God's grace that makes man want this good. Fallen man in his own capacity has only a will for the worse, according to Augustine. If man accepts God's grace, it is God's grace that makes

man accept this grace, in Augustine's opinion. God is the absolute master of all decisions of human will. Human freedom and human will must be considered from this point of view. From our previous discussion of free will in Catherine's doctrine it will be clear that she differs from Augustine in this matter. This difference is easily explained by the absence of the doctrine of predestination, which we discussed above. In Catherine's view, if people will be damned in the end, it will be their own fault. No divine predestination will have anything to do with their damnation. To Augustine's way of thinking divine omnipotence required a markedly different view of human will and freedom. Catherine never denied God's omnipotence. She believed in it (*Orazioni*). However, convinced as she is of God's great love of mankind, (God's essence is love, in her view), she implicitly denies any divine predestination of those who will be blessed or damned, while stressing human free will. She emphatically says that the only way God draws people to Him is by love. God wants man's salvation, but He never forces man in any way to accept His salvation except by His love. This is the way God chose it to be. Man's free will is a great gift of God. God Himself guaranteed this gift, even in the process of salvation. Free will, being a gift of God, does not affect God's power in any way according to Catherine. Her view reminds us of Bernard of Clairvaux in his writing *De gratia et libero arbitrio*. Like Bernard, she considers free will something belonging to the dignity of man, who is made in the image of God. The essence of will is that it is free.

Man's free will is a great gift of God, and it also is a great responsibility. If man makes the wrong choice, his end will be damnation. If man wants to be saved, he has to make his choice for the Bridge. Without the Bridge there is no salvation for man. Man needs salvation, in order to live a virtuous life. Catherine certainly is in accordance with Augustinian doctrine, in stressing man's need of salvation. Also, her opposition of the voice of conscience to sensuality is not alien to Augustine. The same is true of man's need of baptism, which sets man free from original sin. Man can lose the light of faith given to him in baptism, if he turns away from God and the virtuous life. According to the *Orazioni*, man can even become bestial in this way. By this Catherine means that the rational faculty of man's soul can be affected by man's turning away from God. This doctrine reminds us of Augustine's doctrine of illumina-

tion in some way.⁸⁷ Augustine taught that the human mind functions through illumination by the divine Logos. Man's rational capacity belongs to the image of God in man, or as Augustine puts it, man's rational soul is the image of God in man. Even in man's fallen condition man's reason is exalted by the divine "informing," so that God is the light by which are known whatsoever things are known, temporal or eternal. This general conception of knowledge is employed by Augustine in all areas of science, including physical science, aesthetics and moral values. God, the inward illuminator, is the cause of the certainties of all sciences. The human mind enlightened by God judges corporeal things (*sensibilia*) according to incorporeal and eternal principles (*rationes*), which, unless they were above the human mind, would certainly not be unchangeable.⁸⁸ In Augustine's opinion, those principles or *rationes* are the Platonic Ideas, which are in the mind of God, that is, in the divine Logos. The human mind illuminated by the eternal ideas judges everything in accordance with the Ideas, including physical objects (which in their turn are an image of the Ideas). According to Augustine (who bases himself in this respect on the Prologue of the Gospel of St. John), both nature and the human mind are informed "by the Divine Logos." If man accepts God's grace, he may grasp religious truths through his reason. Faith will serve him to achieve these truths, which he would not otherwise have understood. As long as man is alive on earth, man's reason will never be completely blinded. Man will certainly not become bestial by losing his rationality. On the other hand, conversion to God enables man to reach greater knowledge, to wit religious knowledge.

Catherine, considering the capacity for rational thinking the most important capacity of man's soul, and part of the image of God in man, often speaks of the illumination of the soul by Divine Truth. In doing so, she is in accordance with Augustine, as she is when calling God the real object of man's soul. Augustine speaks of the Divine Logos as of Truth (= Veritas). Catherine calls Christ the incarnate Word (= Logos) Truth (= Verita), but she does not relate the Divine Truth to the Platonic ideas. Her doctrine of divine illumination is missing this Augustinian epistemological concept. According to Catherine, Divine Truth enables man to reason well by enlightenment, giving man the light of faith in baptism, without which light man cannot "follow Christian doctrine and the foot-

steps of the Word" (*Or. X*, 76). Light of faith enables man's intelligence to see and understand religious truth and consequently man's will becomes full of love of that which intelligence has understood. A functioning, discerning intelligence is necessary for following Christ in His footsteps, that is, "to keep to the Bridge." The stress laid on the importance of intelligence certainly is an Augustinian element in Catherine's thought. This also is true of the three capacities of the soul, which, forming the image of God in man, must always work together (*Dial.* ch. 52 sq). Memory, which includes consciousness, is related to God, the Father; intelligence to the Son; will to the Holy Spirit. This reference to the three Persons of the Trinity elucidates the unity of God's image in man. Ordinary light of faith is needed by man in order to make the capacities of his soul function well. The latter is necessary, whether man passes through earthly life keeping to the Bridge in ordinary love or in perfect love.

(e) *ad V. Doctrine of Tears.* Chapters 88 through 99 discuss five kinds of tears, corresponding to the spiritual levels of the soul's progress. On the lowest level of spiritual improvement for the better, the soul weeps out of fear of punishment, on the highest level, that of the union with God, the soul sheds "sweet tears of charity." (See our discussion of Catherine's doctrine above).

Tears are an accompanying phenomenon of the soul's way of perfection, which is the way of the soul's salvation through Christ, who is the Bridge between heaven and earth.

(f) *ad VI. The Doctrine of Truth.* In chapters 98 through 109, Catherine speaks of Christ as of "Gentle First Truth." Truth is the real object of the soul's contemplation. Truth enlightens the soul in order to make it see the transitory nature of this world. This is ordinary light of faith. Without this enlightenment the soul would be incapable of discerning between good and evil. When the soul is enlightened by ordinary light of faith, it ought not be content, but must desire to advance to a new spiritual stage. The light will give it the will to advance to a greater perfection.

In this second light there are two kinds of perfect souls. The first kind of these perfect souls occupies itself with mortifying the body,

rather than with killing wrong self-love. However, those souls are perfect as long as their desire for penance has its roots in Christ and not in pride. They must learn that it is Truth who decides what is necessary for their salvation and perfection, whether this is consolation or trial. The second kind of perfect soul sees that Christ gives everything out of love. These souls accept everything for love of God. Their love has prudence as its counterpart. They consider themselves deserving of suffering, but they also consider themselves unworthy of any benefits that may come to them through their suffering. They conform their will completely to the will of God. They rejoice in everything. They do not judge the degree of perfection of others or constrain them to follow the same way. They do not base themselves on penance, but on Truth Himself. They are given right discernment in order to know whether visions and consolations given to them are from God or not.

Catherine asks God for more mercy for herself and her companions. She also wants to know the sins of the clergy so that she may intensify her prayers for the mystical Body of Christ. God tells her to pray, reminding her of the responsibility of knowledge.

The doctrine of the Truth is an epistemological account of the doctrine of Christ as the Bridge. (See III, 2 (d), above). Catherine's concept of truth is influenced by Augustinian doctrine, although there are also differences. Catherine calls Truth the real object of the soul. This is Augustinian doctrine.⁹⁰ Catherine also speaks of "gentle first Truth." This utterance becomes clearer if we compare it to *Orazione XV*, 4 sq. There it is said that Truth makes, speaks and "works" all things. The meaning is that Truth is the worker and cause of everything. Like Augustine, who identified Truth and the Divine Logos, Catherine (*Or. XV*) considers Truth, the second person of the Trinity, the source of everything created. In her opinion, Truth also is the source of every truth human beings can achieve (*Or. XV*). This concept is also influenced by Augustinian doctrine.⁹¹ Catherine is in accordance with Augustine in ascribing man's achievement of truth, whether this is religious truth or scientific truth, to the illumination of man's intelligence by Truth (*Or. XV*).

We must keep in mind that the Augustinian concept of the Platonic Ideas is missing in Catherine's concept of Truth. (See III, 2 (d)), above. Ordinary light of faith is necessary in order to make

man's intelligence function well. We know from *Le Lettere* and the *Orazioni* that this light is offered man in baptism. This ordinary light of faith can only be acquired by rejection of sensuality (*Or. IX*). Man risks losing his natural light of reason if he rejects the light of faith. The soul is more or less perfect according to its ability to correctly use its natural light of intelligence (*Or. XXI*, 114). This is only possible in the light of faith, for by rejecting this light of faith man even risks losing his natural light of reason. Catherine evidently goes further than Augustine in considering the relationship between faith and intelligence so close. According to Catherine (*Dial.* 98; *Or.* 12) the human soul is endowed with the capacity of (*levare se sopra di se*), elevating itself to the knowledge of God in the light of reason which belongs to the soul by nature, if reason is enlightened by the light of faith. It is the light of reason guided by faith, that enables man to go "the way of Truth (= the Bridge)." The three capacities of the soul (memory, including consciousness, intelligence and will), forming the image of the trinitarian God in man, always work together (*Dial.* 51). Therefore, if intelligence accepts divine grace and the light of faith, man's will and memory are involved as well. Like Augustine in his *De Trinitate*, Catherine relates memory to God the Father; intelligence to the Son; and will to the Holy Spirit (*Or. XII*; *Or. XIII*; *Or. XVII*; *Dial.* 111). The Father is the Power, the Son Wisdom and the Holy Spirit Mercy (*Dial.* 140), which also reminds us of Augustine in his *De Trinitate*. The unity of the three persons of the Trinity, always working together, guarantees the unity and cooperation of the three capacities of the soul, which form the trinitarian image of God in man. It is in Christ's eternal blood (*Or. IX*) that the soul knows the light of God's truth (*Or. XII*). Through the Passion of Christ the soul, guided by the light of grace, learns to know God's love of mankind. In the finite time of earthly life it is only by the light of grace that the soul will learn to know the essence of God in the infinite (*Or. XII*). The soul can only learn to know God to the extent that its three faculties (*potenze*) rise from the baseness of humanity, and to the extent that it learns to know God in His light through the light God has given to the soul. Catherine stresses the fact that self knowledge underlies the knowledge of God (*Dial.* IV). If the soul learns to know itself, it becomes humble and filled with hatred of sensuality.⁹² In this humility it is united to God. It will then be

illuminated by the light of grace. It can go the way of perfection, which is the way of Truth, the Bridge. The soul, going this way, guided by "ordinary light," might even be endowed with supernatural light and reach greater perfection. Catherine is convinced that, during its earthly life, the soul can reach the knowledge of God in His essence (*Or. XII*).

(g) *ad VII. The Mystical Body of the Church.* This section, which includes chapters 110–134, deals with the incarnation of Christ, the grace of God in Christ offered to man, and the place of the ministers in the Church. God has chosen His ministers, in order that through them Christ's holy blood and body would be administered to all members of the Church. Catherine is informed about the terrible sins of the clergy: impurity, pride and greed, but she is also told that no one is allowed to punish clergymen (or religious people) except he who has appointed them. Whatever the sins of the ministers might be, they are entitled to carry out their function as ministers of the blood of Christ. Catherine praises God as "light and fire," asking Him again for mercy for the Church and for the whole world.

In this section Catherine stresses the dignity of the Church, of its ministers (*Dial.* 120) and of its members as well. The members of the Church have received greater dignity than the angels through the union with mankind which God made in Christ. God became man and humanity became God through the union of divine nature with human nature in Christ. Catherine's language is highly mystical in this section. This explains the deification of humanity. In this context Cavallini refers to Thomas Aquinas in one of his *Sermons*,⁹³ where it is said that the only begotten Son of God, wanting us to share in His divinity, took our nature, in order to make men gods by the fact that He had become man Himself. The ministers of the Church are sacrosanct as ministers of the Eucharistic mystery, whatsoever their sins may be.

(h) *ad VIII. God's Providence.* Chapters 135 to 153 deal with God's general providence as well as with His special providence. (See our discussion of Catherine's doctrine in part II, 5, above). The latter is especially evident in the way He provides for those who have chosen to be poor, and in the way He will provide in "a certain

case.” Catherine praises God and asks for instruction on obedience. Catherine was informed in providence in connection with her concern for “a certain case,” mentioned in the beginning of the book.

(i) *ad IX. Obedience.* In chapters 154 through 165, obedience is related to the obedience of Christ, who in obedience paid for Adam’s sin. Only through obedience can mankind attain eternal life. There is ordinary obedience and a still more perfect obedience of religious people. It is obedience that conforms the soul to God in charity after the example of Christ. A characteristic of obedience is that it is accompanied by patience.

Like Thomas Aquinas in his writing *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*,⁹⁴ Catherine relates obedience to the obedience of Christ. She does not discuss obedience only here, but she also discusses it in many of her *Lettere*, for instance, Misc. 39; 67; 79 and 215. In her view, obedience is essentially connected with perfection, which is essentially charity. Obedience is the total and complete conformity of man’s will to that of Christ. The greater obedience, the greater perfection and vice versa. So, it is by the fruit of obedience that charity enters heaven (ch. 153). Those who follow the commandments and the counsels of Christ in fact as well as in spirit have greater obedience than those who just keep the commandments in fact and in spirit, and follow the counsels not in fact, but in spirit only. Religious people who take the vow of obedience are expected to have a greater obedience than those who are outside a religious order. In all cases the merit of man’s obedience is measured by man’s love and charity. All human acts fulfilled in obedience have merit. Obedience is nourished by self-knowledge and knowledge of God. Since charity underlies all virtues and all virtues are linked together, (although God gives them differently to different people), it is understandable that obedience is always accompanied by patience.

(j) *ad X. Conclusion.* The last chapters (166–167) are a summary of the contents of the whole book. Catherine thanks the Holy Trinity.

3. *The Orazioni*

The *Orazioni* came to existence in the period 1376–1380. They are

preserved in codices in libraries in Rome and Siena, and partly in codices in libraries in Naples and Vienna, whereas *Orazione* 25 and *Orazione* 26 are preserved on M.S. 1574 in the University Library of Bologna.⁹⁵ Catherine spoke her *Orazioni* in the Italian dialect of Siena.⁹⁶ Her secretaries, including Bartolomeo Dominici and Raimondo da Capua, wrote them down verbatim and translated them into Latin as well.

According to the testimony of Bartolomeo Dominici, Catherine spoke her *Orazioni* when she was in a state of ecstasy, having lost the use of her senses.⁹⁷ In this state which occurred nearly every day in the period 1376–1380 after she had received Holy Communion, she spoke with God in a clear and loud voice and uttered her *Orazioni*. Bartolomeo Dominici says in respect to the *Orazioni*:

Those words and their contents did not seem at all to belong to a woman; on the contrary they made the impression of being the doctrine and the memories of a great doctor.

Le Orazioni deal with Catherine's deepest feelings and thoughts on God's love of mankind, manifested in His creation of mankind and in the incarnation of the Word (= Il Verbo). God is considered "love by essence." He created man for no other reason than His love for mankind to be. God, who, as Catherine puts it, knew us all in general and individually even before we were born (*Or.* 4), knew that man would sin, but this did not prevent Him from creating man. He created man in His image and likeness, giving man the three faculties of the soul: memory, intelligence and will (*Or.* 1, *Or.* 7, *Or.* 17), which reflect the Trinity.⁹⁸ This trinitarian image in man is damaged by Adam's fall and stained by original sin, but man's will is still free after the fall (*Or.* 7). Man's will is so strong that neither God nor the Devil can overrule it, if man does not want it to be overruled. God, who created man out of love, wanted man's salvation. This is why Christ (God and man) was incarnated. Man could not pay his own debts, because man's works are finite, and God, the Father could not do penance either (*Or.* 10). Christ paid for the debts of fallen mankind by his holy blood on the cross (*Or.* 12).

Christ offers man the light of grace in baptism which sets man free from original sin. Man has to accept this grace, when he has come to the age of discernment (*Or.* 9). Even fallen man is not

totally deprived of the light of intelligence, but man has to use his rational faculty very carefully. Otherwise man risks becoming bestial by losing even the natural light of his intelligence (*Or.* 5). Fallen man must accept Christ's grace offered to him in baptism, in order to free himself from wrong self-love and sensuality, and to find the real object of his soul, which is God (*Or.* 21). Since God has created man without man, but is not going to save man without man, man must accept God's grace through his own free choice. God, who has created man for no other reason than His great love for mankind to be wants man's salvation but He does not force man to accept His grace. God, being love by essence, draws man only by His love (*Or.* 1). If man accepts God's grace, man will be recreated into a real image of God (*Or.* 21). Then the three faculties of man's soul will function well, because his soul will no longer be darkened by sensuality and wrong self-love (*Or.* 20). There will then be a reciprocal conformity between man's soul and the Holy Trinity through the light which the Holy Trinity infuses into man's soul. Man's will becomes stronger and stronger in loving God. Then man will reach the destiny he was created for. He will love God and consequently, his neighbour (*Or.* 8).

IV. SUMMARY

We have discussed the most important themes of *Le Orazioni*, many of which are also dealt with in *Il Dialogo* and in *Le Lettere*. However, Catherine deals with the same subjects from different aspects in her different writings. In *Il Dialogo* she deals with the soul's way to spiritual perfection in connection with God's providence (which implies the entire doctrine of salvation), whereas in *Le Orazioni* she primarily focusses her attention on God as the Creator of mankind and His salvation of fallen mankind (which implies the doctrine of the soul made in God's image and likeness). *Le Orazioni* and the other writings prove Catherine's talent for writing and preaching. Her writing demonstrates her knowledge of and mastery of many topics of religious philosophy: the nature of God, the nature of knowledge of God, the nature of the soul, the relationship of God to man, the relationship between intelligence, faith and virtue, and, the religious foundation of moral action, in

particular that exemplified by charity towards our neighbour. Her preaching makes her a true member of the order of St. Dominic. Moreover, her writing and preachings demonstrate that her involvement in Church politics was based on her philosophical and theological conviction that her knowledge imposed on her a duty to act on her beliefs, even at great personal risk. In doing so she is in the company of all those Christian philosophers who were more or less influenced by Plato and Platonism, and whose philosophy always implied a way of life in accordance with the system of their philosophy. The old concept that philosophy was more than an intellectual system and necessarily implied "a way of life" was still alive in the Middle Ages. Catherine, who certainly was longing to be granted martyrdom for Christ's sake, was faithful to the old Platonic tradition of philosophy.

NOTES

1. Robert Fawtier thinks that Catherine was born before 1347. The year 1347 should be imputed to the tendencies of hagiography to make a person more like Christ. If 1347 was the correct date of Catherine's birth year, she would have been 33 years old when she died. Fawtier finds an external argument in the fact that Catherine already was a nun before 1365 and probably already in 1352. See R. Fawtier in *La double expérience de Cathérine Benincase*, Paris 1948, p. 50. I think Fawtier is right.
2. Catherine's letters are transmitted to us in manuscripts of the 15th century, except for 4 letters, of which the original manuscripts are in different libraries in Siena. *Le Lettere* are edited by Gigli in Band II and III of the *Opere della Serafica S. Caterina da Siena*, in Siena in 1713 and in Lucca in 1721. Tomasso edited the letters again in 1860 (Firenze). This edition was followed by the edition of Misciatelli in the 20th century and by that of Eugenio Dupré Theseider, Rome, 1940–1948.
3. A biography composed by an anonymous Florentine author between May and October 1374 was discovered and edited by F. Grottanelli in 1862. The story is generally called *Miracoli*.
4. *Libellus de Supplemento legendae beatae Catharinae Senesis* (written in the period 1402–1407). This work was not printed until 1974. Then I. Cavallini and J. Foralosso edited the Latin text (Rome 1974).
5. The canonization was brought before court in Venice in 1411. The deliberation of the members of the court lasted until the year 1416. It is remarkable that some of Catherine's intimate friends, including Caterina della Spedaluccio, Caterina Ghetti and Bartolomeo Montucci, refused to testify.
6. Raimondo wrote in Latin. The text of the *Legenda beatae Catharinae Senesis*

is to be found in the *Acta Sanctorum, aprilis*, A. III, pp. 862–967; 1385–1395; The text was printed for the first time in 1553 in Cologne, Germany. The writing is usually called *Legenda Major*.

7. *Miracoli XI* The *Legenda Major* I, ch. 2, par. 29 8,-31, mentions Stefano as the name of her brother. Catherine sees Christ as the pope according to the *Legenda Major*. In contrast, she sees Him simply as a bishop, in the *Miracoli*.
8. Knowledge of oneself is the beginning of the knowledge of God according to Catherine, cf. her *lettera* Misc. 97 to Monna Paola.
9. The *lettera* to Monna Agnese, the widow of Sir Orso de' Malavolti (*lettera* Misc. 183) elucidates that Catherine went to the convent of St. Agnes in Montepulciano in the period 1362–1364. According to Raimondo da Capua, Catherine was called by God in a vision to start leading a more active life (*Leg. Maj.* II, ch. 1, par. 118).
10. We think of Tomasso della Fonte, Catherine's first confessor, Raimondo da Capua, Caterina Ghetti, Bartolomeo Dominici, Giovanni Colombini, Matteo de Cenni di Fazio and many others.
11. *Miracoli*: The 18th century chronicle of Santa Maria Novella by Borghiniani. This chronicle is based on much older documents, still available in the libraries of the cities of Siena, Pisa and Firenze. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff in *Die Kirchenpolitische Taetigkeit der heiligen Katharina von Siena unter Papst Gregor XI*, Berlin 1917, p. 18.
12. It seems that Catherine had annoyed people by going into raptures every day after she had received Holy Communion. Tomasso della Fonte forbade her the daily receiving of Holy Communion for some time.
13. *Legenda Major* II, 7, par. 251.
14. See Margarita Albany Mignaty in *Caterina da Siena e la parta che ebbe negli avvenimenti d'Italia nel secolo XIV*, Firenze 1844: p. 51. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff "Die Kirchenpolitische Taetigkeit der heiligen Katharina von Siena unter Papst Gregor XI," Berlin 1917, p. 158.
15. See for instance the letter to cardinal Pietro d'Ostia (d'Estaing) (Misciatelli VII); and the letter to Gérard du Puy, who was general vicar of the Pope in the city of Perugia and later became governor of the city (Misciatelli, 109). The letter contains a prologue on the subject of charity. Catherine did not hesitate to criticize the Pope in the same letter. She blames him for nepotism and weakness of character.
16. *Leg. Maj.* II, ch. 12, par. 257 (p. 926).
17. See *Lettera* 239 in the edition of Misciatelli.
18. See *Lettera* 97 in the edition of Misciatelli.
19. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
20. *Letter to the Florentine woman Domitilla*, in the collection *Lettere di Santi e Beati Fiorentini*, E. Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 63, note 10.
21. See *Legenda Major* II, ch. 15, par. 289 (p. 934).
22. *Lettera* CC XIIIV (Gigli); *Lettera* 232 (Misciatelli). The letter was addressed to Sano di Maco living in Siena.
23. Stefano Maconi had accompanied Catherine on an earlier voyage to Firenze. See Fawtier, *op. cit.*

24. See Augusta Theodosia Drane, *The History of St. Catherine of Siena and her Companions*, London 1880 (3. 1980), p. 303.
25. Fra Felice da Massa belonged to the family of the Tancredi. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 102, note 3.
26. See *Lettera del Beato Stefano Maconi*, addressed to Caffarini on October 26, 1411 (edited by Gigli as an addition to the *Legenda*). See also Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
27. See *Lettera* 237 in the edition of Misciatelli.
28. See *Lettera* 191 in the edition of Misciatelli.
29. See *Lettera* 209 in the edition of Misciatelli and *Lettera* 206 in the edition of Misciatelli; Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
30. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
31. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 150 sq.
32. *Cronica Fiorentina di Marchionne di Coppo Stefani*, ed. Rodolico R^a 773 (R.R. IT. S. S. ed. Carducci t. XXX, p. 306). See Fawtier, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
33. She probably was staying in the house of Pipino. See Eleonore Freiin von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
34. *Lettera a Sano di Maco e agli altri figliuoli in Siena* (Misciatelli 303), written in Firenze. *Lettera a Monna Alessa* (Misciatelli *Lettera* 277).
35. See *Lettera* 344 (ed. Misciatelli).
36. See Fawtier, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 91, n. 7.
37. *Lettera* Misciatelli 373 (A Maestro Raimondo da Capua dell' Ordine dei Predicatori).
38. See *Lettera* Misciatelli 284; *Lettera* Misciatelli 224; *Lettera* Misciatelli 185.
39. *Lettera* 53 (edition of Dupré Theseider to the Anziani of Lucca (Gigli 206; Misciatelli 168).
40. See for instance *Lettera* 37 (Misciatelli) to Nicolò di Ghida, and Fawtier, *op. cit.*, p. 248 sq. M. Pourrat, *La Spiritualité chrétienne* II, 314 sq., is of a different opinion.
41. Catherine is in accordance with Thomas à Kempis and Juan de la Cruz in this respect. See Fawtier, *op. cit.*, p. 290.
42. *Orazioni*, *passim*.
43. Però che Io vi creai senza voi, ma non vi salvaro senza voi, (= I created you without you, but I shall not save you without you), *Dialogo* 23 (edition of Fiorilli, p. 45; edition of Cavallini p. 51): Qui mostrava, la Verita etterna, che egli ci aveva creati senza noi, ma non ci salvara senza noi. (Here Eternal Truth made clear that He has created us without us, but that He will not save us without us); *Dialogo* 119 (Fiorilli p. 245); *Dialogo* 134 (Fiorilli p. 300); *Dialogo* 155 (Fiorilli p. 367); *Orazione* VIII (ed. Cavallini p. 84) and XXII, (ed. Cavallini p. 248).
44. See Thomas in *De praedestinatione* I, 23,5. (Fawtier, *op. cit.*, p. 293 sq). Sed qua re Deus hos elegit in gloriam et illos reprobavit, non habet rationem nisi divinam voluntatem. (= Why God has chosen some to glory, others to be damned, has no other reason than the will of God).
45. See *Sermo* 169, par. 11 (Migne, Patrologia Latina 38).
46. See also our commentary on "the Bridge," part III, 2 (d).

47. *Lettera* 168 (Misciatelli) to the Anziani di Luca, written in the winter of 1376. See Dupré Theseider *Epistolario di Santa Caterina da Siena*, p. 207 s.q. *Ep. XXXXI* to the Queen of Naples (Gigli 13/14, Misciatelli 138): il amore proprio impedisce giustitia. (Self love prevents justice). *Lettera* (Misciatelli) 76 to Frate Giovanni di Bindo di Doceo de' Frati di Monte Oliveto.
48. *Lettera* (Misciatelli) 70; *Lettera* (Misciatelli) 97 to Monna Paolo; *Lettera* III (Theseider) (Gigli 105; Misciatelli 41).
49. *Soliloquia* (*Soliloquiorum Animae ad Deum Liber Unus*) I (Migne, *Patrologia Latina* XL, 863–866). The idea is not altogether contrary to that of Augustine himself. (The just mentioned writing is not to be confused with Augustine's early writing *Soliloquia*).
50. *Lettera* III (Theseider), (Misciatelli) 41.
51. *Lettera* 52 to master Bartolomeo (ed. Dupré Theseider).
52. Solo il segno rimasse del peccato originale. (*Dial.* 148, Fiorilli p. 36) (Only the sign of baptism liberates man from original sin).
53. Subbito che l'anima ha ricevuto il santo battesimo l'è tolto il peccato originale e le è infusa la grazia. (As soon as the soul has received holy baptism, original sin is taken away from the soul and grace is infused into it). *Dial.* ch. 14.
54. *Dial.* 127 (Fiorilli p. 267). The idea of the salvation of all mankind is alien to St. Augustine. It is found in Origen and in Gregory of Nyssa.
55. *Lettera* (Misciatelli) 11; *Lettera* (Misciatelli) 242. See also Fawtier, *op. cit.*, p. 297, note 6.
56. *Orazione V*, written on the day of St. Thomas, 1378 in Rome. See G. Cavallini's textedition of the *Orazioni*, p. 58.
57. *Lettera* (Misciatelli 271) to Monna Alessa.
58. See for instance her letter to the Englishman William Flete (Misciatelli *Lettera* 64).
59. Prior to 1375, Catherine had been an ascetic who wanted to torture the flesh. Then she recognized what the will of God really was. (*Dial.* ch. 11 and 104, and the *Lettere* were written after 1375).
60. Catherine calls Christ's blood eternal (*Or.* 9, 42), because it is united to the eternal and divine nature of the Word.
61. See also *Dial.* 53; 118.
62. See *Dial.* 26–27.
63. This is an Augustinian concept. See *De Trinitate*.
64. The conformity of the soul with God does not exclude human individuality. *Or.* 4 explicitly speaks of human spiritual individuality.
65. Suzanne Noffke in *Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue*, London/New York 1980, refers to Catherine's *Lettera to Pope Urbanus* (*Misc.* 371) in this context. In this letter to Pope Urbanus Catherine tells how the union with God nearly broke her body.
66. *Rom.* 8,26.
67. See Georges Duby in *Le Temps des Cathédrales*, Paris (Gallimard) 1976.
68. See Georges Duby, *op. cit.*, p. 285, Duby points to Leonardo Bruni, secretary of the Florentine government, in this context.
69. It was probably finished in the spring of 1378 before Catherine left for Rome.

- See G. Cavallini, *S. Caterina da Siena, Il Dialogo*, (Edizioni Catheriniane, Roma 1968); Suzanne Noffke, *Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue*, London/New York 1980, (Introduction).
70. Girolamo Gigli, *Il Dialogo*, in *Opere Catheriniane*, IV, Lucca 1726.
71. M. Fiorilli, *Il Dialogo*, in *Scrittori d'Italia*, Bari 1912.
72. Giuliana Cavallini, *S. Caterina da Siena, Il Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza*, Edizioni Catheriniane. Roma 1980. (1. Roma 1968).
73. In her Introduction to *Il Dialogo* Cavallini gives a survey of all previous text editions.
74. Suzanna Noffke, *Catherine of Siena, the Dialogue*, London/New York, 1980. See also note 68.
75. See P. Delfgaauw in *La Doctrine de la perfection selon St. Bernard*, in *Collectio Cisterciennes* 40, 1978, 115c–118. (*Collectanea Cisterciensia*, ed. Forges, Abbaye Cisterciens de Scourmont, 1965 sq.)
76. *Summa Theologiae* II, II, q. 188, a7, ad resp. e ad1. Tanta erit unaquaque religio secundum paupertatem perfectior, quanto habet paupertatem proportionatam proprio fini. (To Thomas poverty and the other counsels have to serve the goal of man's salvation).
77. The Franciscan order demanded absolute poverty, chastity and obedience. See *Rule II (Regula II, bullata of 1223)*. St. Francis thought this the way of living in accordance with Christ's claims in the gospel. (See *Testamentum* 14).
78. In her figurative language Catherine describes a bridge, comparable to the famous (and today still standing) "ponte vecchio" in Florence. For instance in ch. 27, she says that the bridge has walls of stones, so that handlers will not be hindered by rain.
79. Catherine often speaks of "Gentle first Truth," meaning Christ. St. Augustine also spoke of Truth (Veritas), referring to the divine Logos, in many of his writings.
80. See above for a more detailed description of the stairs.
81. See for instance *Confessiones* X, ch. 43.
82. See *Sermo* 152,9 (*Patrologiae Latinae cursus* 38, 824).
83. See also *Orazione VI*.
84. See Noffke. *op. cit.*, p. 206; see also G. Cavallini, *op. cit.*, p. 264. N.B. The comparison of Christ to a sun apparently is of Augustinian origin. The same holds for the image of Christ as heavenly physician in *Or. VI*, which picture appears in Augustine's *Sermones*. (See J. Eykenboom, *Het Christus medicus motief in de preken van S. Augustinus*, Assen 1960. Catherine's speaking of the ineffability of God also reminds us of Augustine in *In Evangelium Johanni*, 1,5.
85. See *De civitate Dei* XII, 26; *De anima et eius origine*, ch. 12,19.
86. *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, ch. 17 *Sermo* 177.
87. *De Trinitate* XII, 10,24.
88. See for instance *De Trinitate* XII, 2,2.
89. *De diversis quaestionibus* 83, no. 46.
90. The concept that the soul must return to God for its own good and happiness is found in all the writings of Augustine, for instance in *De vita beata*, where it underlies the entire argument.

91. See Augustine in the "Cassiacum Dialogues," passim; for instance *Contra Academicos III*, and in *De Magistro*, passim; *De Trinitate*, passim.
92. This concept compares with Augustine's doctrine of conversion in his *Confessiones* (passim).
93. Thomas Aquinas, *Sermo*, in *Opusc. 57*. G. Cavallini, *Santa Caterina da Siena, il Dialogo*, Rome 1980, p. 264.
94. *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*, ch. 12.
95. For the history of the manuscripts, see G. Cavallini in the Introduction of her text edition of *Le Orazioni*, Roma 1978.
96. Catherine's language influenced the literary Italian of later centuries.
97. See G. Cavallini in the introduction of *Le Orazioni*, Roma 1978, p. XII. Cavallini mentions *Il Processo Castellano a cura di M.H. Laurent* (F.V.S.C.S.H.IX) as her source.
98. Memory (*memoria*) refers to God the Father, intelligence to the Son and will to the Holy Spirit. The influence of St. Augustine (*De Trinitate* passim) is very clear. Like the Augustinian "memoria," memory implies consciousness. (See also note 63).

11. Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera

MARY ELLEN WAITHE

I. BACKGROUND

The naturalistic philosophy that characterized the early Renaissance period stressed the connection between humans and the universe. A new emphasis was placed on the scientific study of the human condition. The Renaissance touched all sciences, particularly medicine. Disease came to be understood not to be a consequence of sin which could be cured solely by prayer. Rather, disease was increasingly recognized to be a process which was partly influenced by human action, and partly by natural causes. For centuries, the dissection of corpses had been unacceptable, but the new spirit of scientific inquiry made autopsy commonplace. This facilitated further medical advances.

1. *Galen*

Galen¹ had recommended the mastery of the passions through reason, and especially through conscious verbalization as a way to control disease and debilitation. In Galen's view, many physical manifestations of disease are what we would call "psychosomatic." Galen held that physical manifestations of disease were due more to the mind's errors of judgement and the passionate predisposition to disregard sound judgement, than to disease itself. He held that deliberate psychodynamic manipulation and suggestion could reverse disease processes. Galen was heavily indebted to Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle and the entire neoplatonic tradition, including the early Arab thinkers.

2. 16th Century Spanish Medicine

The later Arab medical treatises synthesized the theories of Hippocrates, Galen and near eastern medicine. Copies of these treatises were housed in Spanish universities and churches, in state archives, and in private collections. The study of Hippocrates and Galen spread, and a new focus emerged in medicine. The scope of medical science expanded from medical practice to the development of new philosophies of medicine. Caught up in the atmosphere of the promise of rapid medical advances, 16th century physicians turned to the study of ancient philosophy, and to speculation about “true human nature.” Later, in the 17th century, medicine would see great *technical* progress with Harvey’s development of a circulatory theory (1628) with Wren’s neurological drawings (1664), with van Leeuwenhoek’s description of bacteria (1665), and with Newton’s optics (1672). But in the 16th century, it was not technical medical science, but philosophy of medicine, which progressed. Speculative philosophy of medicine became as central to medical science as gross anatomy. Medical theory had come to be conceived of as applied philosophy of human nature.

To advance philosophy of medicine, one needed to understand ancient ideas of human nature, and to test those ideas against the rapidly expanding body of knowledge about human anatomy, disease and debilitation. Most of this new medical science affirmed a philosophy of human nature consistent with the microcosm/macrocosmic cosmologies developed by medieval philosophers. This perspective stressed the interdependence of the human body and soul, and the interdependence of humans and the universe. It was assumed that any sound medical theory would be firmly founded in metaphysics and cosmology. According to Carlos Noreña,² new philosophies of human nature were explored by three major 16th century Spanish writers: Gomez Pereyra in *Antoniana Margarita* (1555), Juan Huarte de San Juan in *Examen de Ingenios* (1575), and (Luisa) Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera in *La Nueva Filosofia de la Naturaleza del Hombre* (1587).

3. Juan Huarte de San Juan

According to Huarte, human nature was tripartite: vegetative, sentient and rational.³ The first two “souls” were commonly shared

with animals and plants; the rational soul was commonly shared, but to a lesser degree, with God and the angels. Each mind in turn had its own kind and degree of genius which coordinated with the physical “humours” of heat, cold, moisture and dryness present in the environment. Each humour enhanced the functioning of a particular part of the brain, the memory, the imagination, or the understanding. Consequently, the natural physical ability to access specific environmental humours accounted for all of an individual’s natural physical, mental, and moral aptitudes. Huarte⁴ held that understanding (which required cool dryness) was necessary to medical theory, but imagination (which required heat) was necessary to medical practice.

4. Gomez Pereyra

Gomez Pereyra’s *Antoniana Margarita*⁵ argued that animals were non-sensory automata. If they were capable of sensing, Pereyra claimed, they would also be capable of reasoning, and thus the difference between the human and non-human animals would be obliterated. To Pereyra, the difference between sensory and intellectual knowledge was a difference in kind, not in degree. Pereyra also considered memory an organic power localized in the occipital lobe of the brain.

The views of Huarte and Pereyra were both founded on those of Galen, although each theorist took some exception to particular claims made by Galen. It was in this atmosphere of rapid progress in medicine and other sciences, an atmosphere of intense speculation about human nature, that Luisa Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera grew up. It was also the waning days of the Spanish Inquisition.

II. BIOGRAPHY

Luisa Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera was born in Alcaraz, Spain on December 2, 1562, the fifth of eight children of Miguel Sabuco (b. 1525) and Francisca de Cozar.⁶ Two weeks following her 18th birthday, Oliva married Acacio de Buedo, of Alcaraz.⁷ In 1587, when she was 25, *La Nueva Filosofia de la naturaleza del hombre* was published in Madrid. In the year following its publication, Oliva’s

father wrote a letter of power, her husband and brother executed a promissory note, and her father swore out an affidavit. These documents have led some scholars to assume that Miguel Sabuco, and not Oliva, was the author of *Nueva Filosofía de la Naturaleza del Hombre*. I shall examine that question at the end of this chapter.

III. INFLUENCE

Guardia claims⁸ that historians have attributed to Sabuco an influence that she never had, while acknowledging that the animistic psycho-pathology which she developed appears in later thinkers, including Stahl (1660–1734)⁹ and René Descartes (1596–1650). Like Sabuco, Stahl held that the essence of human nature was an immaterial soul, which thinks, wills, gives shape and substance to the body, and controls all voluntary and autonomic processes. Just as Sabuco's soul secretes *chilo*, (see section 'Philosophy of Medicine', below) which communicates to and informs the various bodily parts, so Stahl's soul generates a "force" which communicates the "spiritual act" of goal-directed movement to the bodily organs. Just as Sabuco's "chilo," can cause the limbs to be the servants of the brain, and execute its will, Stahl's "force" has the capacity to cause the organs to execute the will of the person.

Sabuco is generally credited with preceding Descartes¹⁰ among the moderns to locate the interaction of the rational soul and the body in the brain. Unlike Descartes, she did not locate this interaction in the pineal gland, but throughout the brain, particularly in the sense that the conscious mind can effect and control the unconscious mind and therefore affect and control those bodily functions which are considered autonomic. In this respect, Sabuco's view is more explicitly among the precursors of contemporary medicine and psychiatry than is the Cartesian view.

Whatever Sabuco's own influence on later thinkers may have been, she herself was clearly influenced by the scientific and philosophic currents of her time, and she seems to have been convinced that classical philosophy provided the best underpinnings for a new philosophy of human nature. It was this new philosophy which she hoped would explain contemporary scientific knowledge, and would in part spur new scientific developments.

Sabuco's book saw several editions during her lifetime, including a pirated edition. The first edition was published in 1587 in Madrid, and is listed in Biblioteca Nacional as number R/16267.¹¹ The second edition, imprimatured by the Inquisition, bears the Biblioteca Nacional reference 3/71646, and was published the following year.¹² According to the editor of this edition, sections where the text was deleted by the Inquisition are identified by marginalia, and text which the Inquisition ordered to be incorporated into the work appears in italics. The third edition was a pirated reprint of the second edition, and appeared in 1588. The fourth edition of Sabuco's work, Biblioteca Nacional R/8370, appeared in 1622 in Portugal.¹³ *Nueva Filosofía* was reprinted in each century following Sabuco's death. It remains readily available to this day, has generated a significant amount of secondary literature, and is frequently referenced in the Spanish historical, literary, and medical literature. This would hardly have been the case if it had not been influential.

IV. WRITINGS

Nueva Filosofía de la Naturaleza del Hombre is the only known written work by (Luisa) Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera. It contains several parts, each with its own basic task to accomplish. Sabuco's major thesis was that there was a close connection between the soul and the body, which, if properly understood, would enable humans to control and improve their health and thus extend their lives. Her first task is to describe her theory of human nature by demonstrating the mutual interdependence of soul, body, and cosmos. She focuses on the extent of our knowledge of humans and the universe, interpreting empirical evidence in ways that show how her theory of human nature accounts for and explains that evidence. This is the task of the first part of the work, *Coloquio de el Conocimiento de si Mismo, en el qual hablan tres Pastores Filosofos en vida solitaria, nombrados Antonio, Veronio, Rodonio*, (Coloquy on Self-Knowledge, in which three solitary philosopher peasants named Antonio, Veronio, Rodonio speak). This is the most philosophical part of the Sabuco's work, and it lays the conceptual and theoretical framework for the remaining sections. Therefore, I

will only offer a brief description of the remaining parts of Sabuco's work, and will focus the discussion on the theory of human nature developed in *Coloquio de el Conocimiento de si Mismo*.

Sabuco does not follow the format that contemporary metaphysical writings probably would, i.e., first sketching the general principles, then tracing their effects for theories of physics, astronomy, etc., and finally, showing how those principles fit a particular concept of human nature. Consequently, the modern reader is forced to carefully take note of when she jumps from one level of the theory to another. However, it would be a mistake to consider this to be sloppy philosophy on Sabuco's part. We must remember that her audience was one which naturally imposed the macrocosm/microcosm paradigm on any discussion of metaphysics or cosmology. Such shifts in reference from macrocosm to microcosm would seldom have needed explicit mention. The 16th century philosopher would rarely have trouble distinguishing such shifts, and Sabuco makes them often, frequently where the modern reader would least expect it.

The dialogue of the second part of the work, *Coloquio en que se trata la compostura del mundo como està* (Coloquy on the composition of the world as it is), picks up where the conversation between Veronio and Antonio left off, and continues for an additional seven chapters. Although its chapter numbers are not consecutive with *Coloquio de el Conocimiento de si Mismo*, in *la Compostura del Mundo* Sabuco describes astronomical and geological events in a way that shows them to be empirical data from the macrocosmic counterpart to her theory of human nature. These data are explained by and lend support to that theory.

Building on her view of the relationship of body to soul and of humans to the cosmos, i.e., the known natural system, Sabuco begins the third part of the work, *Coloquio de las cosas que mejoraran este mundo, y sus republicas*, (Coloquy of that which will improve this world and its republics). The eight chapters of this part are numbered to follow *la Compostura del Mundo*. In it, Sabuco focuses on smaller systems, specifically, the known political and cultural systems. In this section, she sometimes discusses and sometimes merely lists applications of her account of human nature to social and political issues and institutions of human society. She suggests legislative, judicial, and social reforms, particularly in the

concepts of basic welfare rights of landless peasants, ordinary workers, householders, and other powerless people. She warns that in humans, good, virtuous qualities aren't hereditary, as they are in plants. Rather, they require careful cultivation, learning by example, and by education. Such ends are thwarted in conditions of extreme poverty and disease, she suggests, where acquiring even the bare necessities of life is all-consuming.¹⁴

Next, Sabuco offers a brief discussion called *Coloquio de Auxilios, o remedios de la vera medicina, con los quales el hombre podre entender, regir, y conservar su salud*, (Coloquy of treatments or remedies of the true medicine with which man can understand, control and conserve his health). Having attempted to demonstrate that the philosophy of human nature is consistent with all that was then known and thought to be relevant to human medicine, Sabuco is prepared to present *Vera Medicina, y vera Filosofia, oculta a los antiguos, en dos Dialogos, compuesta por Doña Oliva Sabuco Barrera, vecina y natural de la Cuidad de Alcaraz* (True Medicine, and true Philosophy, unknown to the ancients, in two Dialogues, conceived by Mrs. Oliva Sabuco Barrera, resident and native of the city of Alcaraz.) It is followed by a latin "dicta brevia" of *Vera Medicina*.

1. Self-Knowledge

"Un Coloquio de el conocimiento de si mismo," a colloquy on self-knowledge, is a conversation among three "shepherd-philosophers" with the comical names "Antonio," "Veronio," and "Rodonio." Since "Antonio" is the one to represent Sabuco's philosophy, that name may have been deliberately chosen by her to bring to mind Pereyra's *Antoniana Margarita* which he had named for his parents. Whatever her intention, Sabuco's "peasants" sound like college graduates. Guardia¹⁵ suggests that this is Sabuco's way of commenting on the level of education provided by the "diploma mills" flourishing in Spain at that time. (You go in a peasant and you come out a peasant who speaks with phony erudition.) Rather, Sabuco may have been making a point about philosophy and about medicine: that they should be relevant to the lives of even the simplest folk. Her peasants defend her philosophy of human nature

and the medical principles derived from that philosophy against the views of many theorists, including Galen, and Democritus; views which were still taught in the academies. We know that Church authorities edited the text, removing some of the original material, and substituting clarifications, but Sabuco appears to have taken greater issue with some of the views of contemporary medical theorists like Pereyra¹⁶ and Huarte, than she did with those of the Church. Although we do not know where Sabuco received her education, it is clear that she was extremely well-read in classical and contemporary philosophy as well as in medical theory. She cites Aristotle's *De Anima* and *De Generatione Animalium*, Plato's *Alcibiades*, *Philebus*, *Timeaus*, and *Theatetus*, Pliny, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, and Aquinas' *Commentary on Job*. She also refers to the ideas and writings of Galen, Homer, Averroes, Hippocrates, ibn Sina, (Avicenna), Aelian, Horace, Seneca, Cicero, Diocletian, Crates, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, Boethius, Themistius, Marsilio Ficino, and other philosophers and scholarly writers.

2. *Cosmology, Metaphysics and Medicine*

The first part of the work considers three manifestations of human nature: the purely physical, the intellectual, and the moral. Like her predecessors and contemporaries, Sabuco views human nature as a microcosm of nature itself and holds that once human nature and the means of conserving human health and life are known, we will understand the practical reasons for studying metaphysics. Knowing the macrocosm of which we are a microcosm will help us understand how to live in this world, and how it comes to be as it is. Thus, Sabuco's cosmology is introduced as a macrocosm of human physiology, psychology, and morality. Sabuco conceives of three souls, vegetative, sentient, and rational. Plants have only a "vegetative" soul; animals, a "vegetative" and a "sentient" soul; humans, a "vegetative," a "sentient" and a "rational" soul.¹⁷ Like Huarte, she considers animals to be both sensible and passionate beings. And it is the question of the relationship of the passions to human physical and mental well-being that occupies the greater part of her writing.

(a) *The Structure of Human Nature*. She finds in human nature, microcosmic parallels to the macrocosmic, external world. Referring to the microcosm, she says:

. . . you should know that the ancients called man the microcosm (that is, the little world) because of the similarity to the Macrocosm (that is, the big world, the world we see), because in this world there is a Principle, a moving and first cause (God has created, rules and governs it) and from this is born all secondary causes, of movement, causation and creation of that which is given to [secondary causes]. Here in the small world (which is man) there is a principle which is the cause of all acts, affects, movements and actions that [man] has, which are understanding, reason, and will: it is the soul which originates from the brain, which is in the head. [The soul is the] divine member which is capable of all the movements of the body, as Plato said in *Timeaus* because this understanding and will are not situated nor do they consist in any organic body . . . [But] these [organic body parts] serve the soul like house servants serve the house, to inform and guard the species, for which [in accordance with] the Principle, they will do through them, that which the soul wants.¹⁸

In addition to the importance she attaches to the microcosm theory, Sabuco introduces the metaphor of the human being as a “tree of roots,” an uprooted tree.¹⁹ Considering the brain as the “root” of man, she calls man the tree of roots:

because of his similarity to a tree, the roots above, and the leaves are below. The root is the cerebrum and its sections the anterior, central, and posterior medula.²⁰

In Sabuco's view, the brain, the rational soul, is the locus of personhood. It is important to note that she does not attempt to segregate the soul, the locus of moral personhood, from the brain, the locus of rational, physical and psychological personhood. On her account of medical epistemology, the imagination has a central place in physical as well as moral well-being. Knowledge of human nature is a form of self-knowledge. Once we understand human nature, and understand the role of the imagination in regulating

physical and moral debilitation, we can understand the effects of the negative and positive moral emotions on moral action and on our physical condition. Although she does not use philosophical jargon, Sabuco recommends introspection to develop insight into moral psychology, moral philosophy, and philosophy of medicine. She has, as she says, a general theory of human nature. That theory is expressed in terms of the prevailing cosmological theory, and her own “tree of roots” metaphor. Through these, Sabuco stresses the unity of humans and the universe, and the importance of the conscious mind to the human condition. In what follows, I shall attempt to describe those views.

(b) *The Human Microcosm*. In connecting her microcosmic theory to the human condition, Sabuco cites cycles of an individual’s improvement and decline, and relates the human condition to meteorological²¹ and astronomical²² conditions. Just as the moon is always waxing or waning, increasing or decreasing, so a person is always either improving or declining.²³ Thus, the human life cycle is part of her cosmology. But, since illness and debilitation are to some degree experienced occasionally by most people, it would appear that Sabuco is committed to describing the micro-cycle of life as consisting of a series of micro-cycles of wellness and illness. The cycle of improvement from infancy through maturity which she describes can itself be considered to be a series of cycles of more frequent, longer periods of health, and of fewer and briefer periods of illness. This then changes to a cycle of decline from maturity through old age, marked by a series of more frequent, longer bouts of illness and infirmity, and less frequent, shorter periods of health and vigor.²⁴ According to Sabuco, we can affect the microcycles of human life through self-knowledge.

Although Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient philosophers recommended self-knowledge, Sabuco felt that they gave little practical advice for acquiring that knowledge.²⁵ She may have intended to fill the gap. According to her, much of self-knowledge comes from knowledge of the passions, knowledge of the causes of health and sickness, and from the prudence to avoid extremes. It is by reference to the idea of moderation, she says, that an individual can find happiness. To be happy, one must be wise, good, and content with moderation in everything. If we take Sabuco’s account further,

even too much theorizing, too much science, would waste the spirit and dry up the heart, inclining one, as it does, too much toward the perfectly rational and too little toward the passionate and emotive. Rarely, she says, is erudition accompanied by insight, and the erudites, having little more than passionate curiosity, barely know the exquisite joys of the spirit.

(c) *Limitations to Knowledge.* Sabuco notes that there are limitations to knowledge accompanying different ontogenic stages of development. She says that humans are never conscious of nor really knowledgeable about the changes which occur with advancing age. How many, she asks, have, in the flower of a most robust youth, fallen dead at the very moment that they should be flourishing? She states that such deaths are usually caused by a precipitous flood of cerebral fluid raging to the brain, rather than being well-distributed throughout. Elsewhere, she implied²⁶ that an individual who knew more about “true human nature” would have been aware of such a possibility, and would have taken appropriate precautions. A slow, steady flow of cerebral humidity makes men wiser and more intelligent, by slowly drying the cerebral fluids to the proper extent. But ontogenic limitations to self knowledge interfere with the ability to understand “true human nature,” and to take the proper precautions to see to it that our passions don’t override our judgment. Consequently, babies, who have no control over passions or over bodily fluids, also have no judgment. Youths, who are learning to moderate themselves, develop some judgment. The mature, who have gradually mastered moderation of their bodies and passions, turn out to be wisest of all.

The aged retain control over their passion, but lose judgmental ability because their “nerve sap” gradually dries up. This is a normal occurrence, Sabuco stresses. Her theory of human nature and her philosophy of medicine are not intended to be resources with which a person’s life can be extended beyond a certain natural life span. Unlike some of her compatriots, Sabuco is not seeking a fountain of youth. Rather, she is developing a theory which, if correct, will enable humans to live out a natural life span and die a natural death, free of disease. She therefore recognizes senility in the aged as a naturally occurring ontogenic cause of defect in judgement.²⁷

3. *Imagination*

For Sabuco, the imagination influences health, so she recommends strongly that we avoid boredom, because it leads to imagining reasons for either self-loathing, or disgust at the pleasure of others. Work and pleasure should both be varied because the negative emotions ultimately exhaust the spirit and the body. For this reason, you shouldn't keep working at thankless tasks or pursue obscure, meaningless notions in the guise of seeking some worthwhile knowledge. Although Sabuco warns against an uncontrolled imagination, it is clear that her epistemology and ontology incorporate her account of the imagination and accord it a central place. She says that the imagination can give shape to whatever it focuses on. Nothing more *resembles* reality than the images produced by that mirror of the world, the imagination.²⁹ Because of imagination, the passions are able to influence reason.

Sabuco appears to be a pre-Cartesian rationalist-skeptic. Although she incorporates no formal system of doubt for the purposes of arriving at an epistemology, her comments on the central role of the imagination in human moral emotions, perception of truth, and consequently, moral and non-moral reasoning, suggest that we need to temper the imagination so that we cannot fool ourselves as to what is real. This suggests something that Descartes does not: that we should be careful of what we can imagine to be true, we may be allowing our imagination, rather than an evil genius, to fool us. This would be a much more profound case of self-deception than those Descartes focuses on in the *Meditations*. There, he allows for two kinds of deceptive imaginings: those produced by faulty sensory perceptors, and those produced by an evil, more powerful being. Sabuco cites what might be a more common cause of self-deception: we let our imagination carry us away, into a world we are better able to cope with. Sabuco would say that not only is Descartes' imagining that he thought, thought itself, but unbridled thought – the very sort, which, if left immoderated, could lead away from improvement in philosophical theory, to severe physical and mental illness. Imaginary fear can scare you to death, she notes, and some people are happy only when they are dreaming, because the imagination is capable of reshaping their image of the world to one they can be content with. The imagination can make something like an image feel more real.³⁰

And we might note, the imagination can make an argument seem more self-evident than it would appear to a better controlled imagination. According to Sabuco, the cognitive experience of reality is less meaningful alone than when it is combined with the emotional experience of reality. Unlike the cognitive experience, the passionate experience can make the person happy, and physically and mentally well.

4. Moral Psychology and Medicine

Sabuco notes that traditional medical theory has failed to control disease:

How seldom, how rare is it, for men to live an entire natural life span and die a natural death, passed without sorrow that the critical humours end, yet we see in other common animals that they live a natural life span until a natural death, and without (or very rarely with) illness.³¹

She attributed this failure of medical science to a philosophical misconception of human nature which ignored the overwhelming impact of the emotions on physical health. To set the groundwork for her argument, she reviews the emotional causes of sickness and death in animals and humans. Next, she poses the problem which she intends later to solve: "Why is the passion-caused incidence of sickness and death more extensive in humans than in animals?" In her view, this is a question for philosophy as much as for forensic medicine.³² Sabuco develops a comprehensive theory of human nature through an examination of this question alone. She claims that regret characterizes humans, but no other natural creatures. Only humans mourn the past, are dissatisfied with the present, and worry about the future.³³ She attributes the unique human capacity for producing such self-destructive emotions to the human ability to exercise imagination. For Sabuco, humans are psychosomatic units.

Chapters I to XXI of the book describe the somatic ill-effects of depression,³⁴ anger,³⁵ sadness,³⁶ love,³⁷ excessive joy,³⁸ distrust,³⁹ hatred,⁴⁰ shame,⁴¹ compassion,⁴² laziness,⁴³ jealousy,⁴⁴ and vengeance.⁴⁵ These emotions disturb the balance of bodily humours

because they squeeze the humidity and humour of the brain, “where the divine soul is located.” They can cause illness and even death.⁴⁶ Worry and despair also create discord among the parts of the soul, and can have similar results. The discord can disrupt the “vegetable” functions of the body: the circulatory, digestive and nervous systems, resulting in ailments ranging from fever, gout, and nervous ticks, to tuberculosis, ulcers, and epilepsy.

Anxiety and fear also have physical effects. Among these, Sabuco cites common reports that those on death row often die naturally while awaiting execution.⁴⁷ She cites cases of miscarriage caused by emotional shock to pregnant women.⁴⁸ The worst case, she claims, is when death is caused either by the loss of a loved one, or by the loss of another’s love. In this latter case, reason can be powerless against such strong passion, and death is caused by a literal and figurative drying up. The emotional soul is completely absorbed by the object of its desire and obstructs the normal functioning of the corporeal soul, causing the body to suspend its normal functioning. There is a preventive: the avoidance of such a consuming passion. There is also a cure: replace the consuming passion with a healthier passion, another object of love.⁴⁹ Excessive passion can prove overwhelming and can cause death.⁵⁰ Despair can end in suicide. Embarrassment can paralyze as cerebral fluid rushes to the skin, causing blushing, and often immobilizing the person and reducing them to powerlessness.⁵¹ Chapters XXV to XXX and LVII-LXI discuss the emotions of the soul which promote the well-being of the body: hope,⁵² moderation,⁵³ love,⁵⁴ friendship,⁵⁵ gratefulness,⁵⁶ magnanimity,⁵⁷ prudence,⁵⁸ wisdom,⁵⁹ and happiness.⁶⁰ The theory underlying Sabuco’s entire argument is that there is close connection between physiology and psychology. And it is on the basis of such empirical observation that she develops her philosophy of human nature. She demonstrates clearly how coordinated her theories of psychology and physiology are. But her central theses are that the emotions affect the soul; and that we can understand the relationship between human nature and the rest of the world.

5. Philosophy of Medicine

Sabuco’s cerebral anatomy⁶¹ locates common sense, understanding, and the will in the frontal region of the brain; imagination and

perception occupy the central lobe, while memory, the warehouse for past images, is located in the posterior lobe. The function of the understanding is to analyze and draw conclusions, that of the will to issue orders for the various organs to execute. The nucleus of Sabuco's medical philosophy is the theory of "nerve sap." Prior to the contemporary conception of electrical transmission of neurological impulses, and prior to the understanding of synaptic response, nerves were thought to contain a "sap" which moved through the nerve. Sabuco is the first to enunciate this theory, although the later English physicians, Willis, Warton, Glison, and Carleton are usually credited with its initial development.⁶²

White nerve sap, called '*chilo*'⁶³ performs three functions: it controls dental occlusion for mastication, controls absorption and digestion, and, during sleep, it evaporates to the brain. This permits the body to rest, while the *chilo*-controlled brain regulates the blood, and controls basic physiological functions. If the *chilo* is distributed normally, the individual has good health, and is happy and satisfied. This Sabuco referred to as a state of "improvement." If the *chilo* doesn't descend or doesn't spread gradually through the organism (as, she says, happens with infirmity or in old age) it produces a state of unhappiness and physical decline which she referred to as "worsening". Worsening can culminate in death.⁶⁴

(a) *Influencing the Parts of Soul*. Many things which affect the sentient and rational parts of the soul can influence the quality of our health. Music appeases the sentient soul. It comforts and is beneficial for treatment of nervous disorders. Sabuco expresses astonishment that such powerful medicine should fall into disuse.⁶⁵ Animals know of its beneficial and harmful effects and are as susceptible to harmony as they are to cacophony. As with sound,⁶⁶ odor,⁶⁷ color,⁶⁸ and taste⁶⁹ can each have healthy and debilitating effects. Good odors, such as those of flowers and good food, improve the disposition and outlook. Bad odors,⁷⁰ like those of decay and excrement, disgust and make people ill. The bright colors⁷¹ (white, red, green, etc.) enliven; the dull colors (grey, black, etc.) have a sombering effect.

Sabuco recommends allowing the rational part of the soul or brain to be affected by those things which will most benefit the body. In this way, a person can manipulate the rational part of the soul to the advantage of the body and of the soul itself. Just as you

divest (literally, “undress”) yourself of clothes when you go to bed, so also should you divest yourself of all worries. Worries will cause ulcers and other digestive problems. Furthermore, the activity of worrying causes the rational soul, particularly, the two frontal lobes where understanding, will, imagination, and perception are located, to work when the brain is in need of rest.⁷² Similarly, the central lobe, where perception is located, can be affected by a wound sending messages of pain to it. The ill spirits and humors that cause the pain in the wound can travel to the brain and cause death. It is best, Sabuco says, to keep the poison from the brain by tying off the affected part between the wound and the brain.

In fever and delirium, the soul or brain loses some of its essence through cerebral fluid which oozes out of the body in the form of perspiration. This excessive dehydration weakens the mind by draining it. The will to live (hope) manifests itself by conserving bodily fluids, and thirsting for liquids. In this way a passion (hope) is produced by reason (a function of the brain) to put an end to the discord destroying the various parts of the soul. Those who are so depressed that they can eat or drink very little, but cry all day, have the cerebral fluid which was lost through tears restored, when the brain demands sleep in compensation: “The ‘sad ones’ sleep more than the happy ones.”⁷³ In sleep there is respite and the possibility of hope – the sole remedy for despair.

(b) *Medicine, Anthropology and Biology.* As evidence that her medicine is not only closely connected with her cosmology and metaphysics, but consistent with the other physical sciences, Sabuco discusses physical properties of objects, particularly, the properties cold and heat. She discusses the effects of cold and heat on examples from zoology, biology, and astronomy. For example, referring to animal hibernation, she notes that sudden cold causes cerebral fluid to fall from the head into the stomach, nourishing the animal. She explains that during hibernation brain functions (I assume that here she means certain perceptual abilities) are suspended while the cerebral fluid, now in the animal’s stomach, nourishes it, aided only by whatever humidity enters through the skin.⁷⁴ Any excess liquid not eliminated in normal excretory functions leaves through the feet. Anthropomorphizing now, Sabuco claims that our feet become cold and clammy with moisture because the brain communicates to the lower extremities the command to

discharge excess bodily humidity. However, she claims, recalling her statement that it is the too sudden heating or cooling that creates physical illness, and that it is the speed of discharge of humidity that the brain does not control well, we must keep the soles of the feet warm and protect the trunk from overheating. This will prevent the feet from too quick a temperature change. Likewise, one should dress quickly during times of temperature extremes.

It is the sun⁷⁵ which brings plants to life, and which helps animals maintain normal temperature. Excessive heat⁷⁶ is as life-threatening as excessive cold; rather an ambient, moderate temperature of whatever touches the skin, be it air (as with man and animals) or water (as with fish) is most conducive to sustaining life. Such air or water continuously replenishes itself of essential life-supporting nutrients. Nothing is more pernicious than the stale air of a sick-room, she reminds. Fresh air, moderately humid, smells healthy, and it enlivens, rejuvenates and nourishes the brain.⁷⁷

(c) *Morality and Medicine*. Sabuco offers some discussion of issues of morality raised by her question, "what is the effect of the passions on human nature?"⁷⁸ She introduces what she no doubt takes to be empirical evidence of the truth of her general theory of human nature. This "evidence" consists of assorted commonly known "facts." The "facts" are presented as though the claims she makes regarding them will be universally recognized to be true. Thus, the empirical evidence is introduced to demonstrate the relevance of her natural philosophy to her philosophy of medicine, and of her philosophy of medicine to several issues of moral and social philosophy. According to her, compassion⁷⁹ is a natural sentiment of sympathy for the suffering of one's fellow humans. As evidence, she mentions tears, swooning, and weakness of the knees which, she says, follows the loss of cerebral fluid. The complete loss of liberty represented by imprisonment or slavery has the same somatic ill effects: skin lesions, parasitic infections, jaundice, gangrene and death.⁸⁰ Too much manual labor stifles the development of intelligence, although appropriate amounts benefit the operations of the body. One needs leisure to develop the intellect. That is why rulers must have leisure if they are to rule well.⁸¹ According to Sabuco, the moral force of rule is in its wisdom; the counsels of one wise person are worth more than the brute force of a million strong men.

The seven deadly sins⁸² represent the worst among the passions. She claims that excessive performance of acts which are not in themselves sinful can cause serious disease and debilitation. In support of this claim, she cites that in ordinary sexual intercourse,⁸³ the "essence of the human race," the cerebral fluid, leaves the brain, travelling to the sexual organs where it is discharged. It is normally recuperated through the rest that follows intercourse, but excessive sexual activity causes excessive fluid loss and results in brain-stem dehydration. The evidence of this is the madness caused by venereal diseases.⁸⁴ Understood this way, there is a natural, medical basis for the moral sanctions against sexual promiscuity. According to Sabuco, the healthy and moral passions are the virtues. They promote individual and social harmony. The unhealthy, immoral passions are vices: they cause sickness, disease, and social discord. The healthy passions produce a harmony between the corporal and spiritual aspects of the soul; the unhealthy passions throw the soul off-balance and the imbalance is evidenced by physical and mental illness.

Sabuco wants medicine to utilize philosophy to improve medicine, and therefore to improve the human condition. But medicine must begin with a philosophical inquiry into and understanding of human nature. She says:

Philosophy is the science of divine and natural things, and knowing the causes of all such things is a virtue, and, in humans, the greatest virtue . . .⁸⁵

Only through the wisdom that is true philosophy of human nature can humans acquire that which is best. Even if wisdom could be seen, it couldn't be something more loved by humans, for it provides the knowledge of health and happiness.⁸⁶

V. A QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

The year *Nueva Filosofia de la Naturaleza del Hombre* was published, Miguel Sabuco gave his oldest son Alonso a letter of power,⁸⁷ in which he identified himself as the author of the book. Miguel Sabuco claimed that his "daughter Mrs. Oliva, . . . [had been]

named its author only to confer honor on her . . .” but that she had no legal interest in the volume nor authority over it. Rather, Miguel Sabuco claimed to be granting “complete power” to Oliva’s oldest brother, Alonso, to take the book to Portugal for printing there under Miguel’s name. Alonso and his wife made the journey, staying at his mother-in-law’s house. He returned to Spain without accomplishing his mission. Miguel, the father, initially refused to reimburse Alonso for expenses owed to his mother-in-law in Portugal, but eventually relented on the condition that both Alonso and Oliva’s husband, Acacio de Buedo, give Miguel a promissory note for the money advanced. This meant that Miguel considered the funds not “reimbursement” but a loan. Five months after advancing the loan, Miguel executed an affidavit reiterating his authorial claim.

Why was the book never published in Miguel’s name? Why did every edition name Oliva as author? Why did Miguel refuse to pay Alonso’s expenses for the Portugal trip? Why did Acacio de Buedo co-sign a note to repay Miguel for Alonso’s expenses when the original purpose of the fruitless trip was to publish Oliva’s book under her father’s name? And finally, why, after giving Alonso the money with which to repay his mother-in-law, did Miguel execute yet another legal document, this time, an affidavit, again claiming authorship? In this section I shall explore these and other questions related to the authenticity of the work.

Just before Oliva’s birth, Miguel Sabuco had been named solicitor for the city of Alcaraz, and twenty-eight years later, in 1590, he was named City Attorney. In the interim, he was a steward in an apothecary store, but it is unclear whether he was the pharmacist, or the business manager. The latter would not have been an unusual role for an attorney, since purchases of pharmaceuticals and botanicals may have involved contracts. His knowledge of the law may have accounted for his penchant for creating legally binding documents which would support his claims to authorship of the book. But it doesn’t account for the fact that if he wrote it, he allowed Oliva to be named as its author. Nor does it account for his sending Alonso abroad to publish the work under Miguel’s authorship. Nor can these details of Miguel Sabuco’s employment history account for the fact that no one who was in a position to know who the true author was, took Miguel’s claims seriously.

We might first ask why the work appeared under Oliva's name originally. Two simple answers have their separate appeal. The first answer is that she wrote it. The second is that Miguel Sabuco wrote the work but was not willing to risk his personal and professional status by claiming authorship. If the Inquisition raised strong objections, he might have reasoned, a young married woman was at less risk than was an established professional man who held a public office. On this account, when only minor changes were requested, Miguel felt safe in claiming authorship.

We might also inquire why Alonso did not carry out his father's directive to publish the book in Portugal, but returned without completing his errand. Did the Portugese printer refuse a commission to reprint a book only recently published in Spain because the person commissioning the publication was requesting that another party be named as the author? Did Miguel retaliate against Alonso's failure to secure publication by refusing reimbursement when Alonso later tried to collect travel expenses from his father for the fruitless trip? In September following the trip, Miguel finally lent Alonso the money to repay his mother-in-law, requiring Oliva's husband, Acacio, to co-sign the promissory note. Five months after that, Miguel executed an affidavit, again claiming authorship of the book. Dated February 20, 1588, it claimed⁸⁸ that he, Miguel, was the author and reserved all rights to the book(s)⁸⁹ and that he had originally named his daughter as author only to honor her. Further, he claimed that she had agreed to keep quiet about her father's authorship until he felt that the time was right for him to come forward and claim authorship. He cites the promissory note as evidence of the truth of the affidavit.

Did the entire family ignore Miguel Sabuco and conspire with Oliva to defraud him of his fame? Was Miguel Sabuco simply trying to achieve some recognition for his role in Oliva's education? As the person who was probably responsible for providing Oliva's educational opportunities, if not for educating her himself, the success of her book would naturally reflect on him. Why would Oliva's husband agree to co-sign a promissory note to repay his father-in-law for a trip undertaken by Oliva's brother and sister-in-law intended to publish Oliva's book in Miguel's name? Were Acacio and Alonso just humoring Miguel? Did that inspire Miguel to execute the subsequent affidavit? It is tempting to offer an explanation on the

one hand, of the documents,⁹⁰ and on the other, of the fact that no edition, Portuguese or otherwise, was ever published under Miguel's name. Even if Oliva's husband had entered into a serious agreement with her father and brother to facilitate the change of authorship, it is inconceivable that the officers of the Inquisition would imprimatur subsequent editions naming Oliva as author in the face of united family opposition to her supposed fraud. Such factors are ignored by those like Abellan who discuss the work as though Miguel had indeed authored it.⁹¹

The letter, the promissory note, and the affidavit, were private papers, not public documents. When the receipt of the imprimatur of the second edition by the Church, and Miguel's subsequent receipt of a high public office, are considered in light of the private nature of the documents, they support the conclusion that the elderly Sabuco's authorial claims were only made privately, and were never taken seriously by anyone who would have been in a position to know whether those claims were true. Moreover, the very survival of the note is rather telling. Promissory notes are held by the person to whom repayment is owed until the payment has been made. Then, the note is signed acknowledging repayment, and returned to the person who executed it. But the note executed by Acacio and Alonso had never been repaid. Did they (and Oliva) steal Miguel's book and then steal his money? Or, did Miguel Sabuco deeply resent Oliva's failure, indeed, the world's failure, to recognize him as the source of his daughter's genius? Are the documents he created evidence of his authorship, or are they evidence that his family humored him as best they could by observing all the formalities he demanded? Are they evidence that Alonso took the trip to humor Miguel, and to humor Miguel, Alonso and Acacio signed a promissory note to obtain reimbursement of the travel expenses? The survival of the promissory notes suggest that neither Alonso nor Acacio ever intended to repay what they considered reimbursement, and Miguel considered a debt, any more than they ever intended to publish the book under Miguel's name. Indeed, when the survival of the documents is considered with the fact of imprimatur, and the fact that the book continued to appear under Oliva's name, we are led to conclude that no one who was in a position to know the truth of Miguel's claims, not family, not church authorities, not even the printers, ever believed those claims.

Part of Sabuco's text may be relevant to the question of authorship. In *Vera Medicina* she sets out the premises of her philosophy of medicine. Interestingly, the conversants are now "Antonio" the peasant, and "Doctor" the physician. It is Antonio who teaches the Doctor. At one point, the doctor asks how an uneducated peasant could digest the thoughts of such important writers, and change all of medical theory without ever having studied medicine, and without referring to his books? Antonio responds that what he's muttered between his teeth really came from God out there in the pasture, amidst the herds. He, Antonio, gave his opinion, crediting "whomever it was" [the ancient and contemporary authorities].⁹² Through Antonio Oliva says that it *is* possible to become self-educated, to study philosophy and medical theory independently, and to teach philosophy of medicine to the practitioners. Cuartero suggests that Sabuco was Simón Abril's student,⁹³ however she credits the development of her theory to her God-given natural ability, rather than to her father.

NOTES

1. Galen, *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, Paul W. Harkins, translator, Ohio State University Press.
2. Carlos G. Norena, *Studies in Spanish Renaissance Thought*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff (1975).
3. *op. cit.*, Ch. III.
4. Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de Ingenios para las ciencias* . . . (1575). Excerpted in Morejon, D. Antonio Hernandez, *Historia Bibliografica de la Medicina Espanola*, III, Madrid: Jordan e Hijos 1967 reprint of 1843 edition, p. 229–257.
5. For description and excerpts of Pereyra's writing, see Morejon, *op. cit.* s.v. "Gomez Pereira", p. 37–47.
6. Her mother died young. Her father married Ana Garcia. They had one child.
7. Florentino M. Torner, *Doña Oliva Sabuco de Nantes*, M. Aguilar, editor, Madrid: no publication date given (circa 1930), p. 13.
8. J.-M. Guardia, "Philosophes Espagnols: Oliva Sabuco," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, XXII, No. 2, 1886, p. 272.
9. Stahl, Georg Ernst. *Theoria Medica Vera*, (1707), in *Oeuvres médico-philosophiques et pratiques*, 5 vols. Paris 1859–1863.
10. René Descartes, *Traité des Passions de l'ame* published 1650.
11. Doña Oliva Sabuco. *Nueva filosofia de la Naturaleza del hombre, no conocida ni alcanzada de los grandes filosofos antiguos: la qual mejora la vida y salud humana*. Madrid: P. Madrigal (1587).

12. Doña Oliva Sabuco, *Nueva filosofía de la naturaleza del hombre, no conocida ni alcanzada de los grandes filosofos antiguos: la qual mejora la vida y salud humana*. Madrid: P. Madrigal (1588).
13. Doña Oliva Sabuco, *Nueva Filosofía de la naturaleza del hombre, no conocida ni alcanzada de los grandes filosofos antiguos: la qual mejora la vida, y salud humana: Con las addiciones de la segunda impressio, y (en esta tercera) expurgada* Braga: Fructuoso Lourezo de Basto (1622).
14. Oliva Sabuco de Nantes, *Obras*, Octavio Cuartero, ed., Madrid: Ricado Fé, 1888. p. 196–199. Subsequent references to Sabuco's work are to this edition.
15. Guardia, *loc. cit.*
16. Although she doesn't mention her contemporary, Gomez Pereyra, by name, she criticizes his reconstruction of the ancient doctrine of the automatism of animals. In this respect, Descartes can be said to have been influenced by Pereyra rather than Sabuco.
17. *op. cit.*, p. 8.
18. *op. cit.*, p. 124.
19. *op. cit.*, p. 143–148.
20. *op. cit.*, p. 143.
21. *op. cit.*, p. 85–89.
22. *op. cit.*, p. 68–69, 89–90, 96–98.
23. *op. cit.*, p. 68–69, 96–98.
24. *op. cit.*, p. 133.
25. *op. cit.*, p. 4.
26. *op. cit.*, p. 128.
27. *op. cit.*, p. 129–131.
28. *op. cit.*, p. 71.
29. *op. cit.*, p. 92.
30. *op. cit.*, p. 92–93.
31. *op. cit.*, p. 3.
32. *op. cit.*, p. 4–5.
33. *op. cit.*, p. 8 ff.
34. *op. cit.*, p. 5–14.
35. *op. cit.*, p. 32.
36. *op. cit.*, p. 19–21.
37. *op. cit.*, p. 25.
38. *op. cit.*, p. 29.
39. *op. cit.*, p. 32.
40. *op. cit.*, p. 32.
41. *op. cit.*, p. 34.
42. *op. cit.*, p. 36.
43. *op. cit.*, p. 39.
44. *op. cit.*, p. 41.
45. *op. cit.*, p. 42.
46. For some examples see *op. cit.* pages 11–12.
47. *op. cit.*, p. 13.
48. *ibid.*

49. *op. cit.*, p. 22.
50. *op. cit.*, p. 53.
51. *op. cit.*, p. 34.
52. *op. cit.*, p. 50–51.
53. *op. cit.*, p. 52.
54. *op. cit.*, p. 53.
55. *op. cit.*, p. 56.
56. *op. cit.*, p. 99.
57. *op. cit.*, p. 101.
58. *op. cit.*, p. 105.
59. *op. cit.*, p. 110.
60. *op. cit.*, p. 45–49, 114–123.
61. *op. cit.*, p. 143–148.
62. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. “History of Medicine.”
63. *op. cit.*, p. 144.
64. *op. cit.*, p. 148.
65. *op. cit.*, p. 71.
66. *ibid.*
67. *op. cit.*, p. 75.
68. *op. cit.*, p. 76.
69. *op. cit.*, p. 77–79.
70. *op. cit.*, p. 75.
71. *op. cit.*, p. 76.
72. *op. cit.*, p. 132.
73. *op. cit.*, p. 21.
74. *op. cit.*, p. 85–88.
75. *op. cit.*, p. 89.
76. *op. cit.*, p. 88–89.
77. *ibid.*
78. *op. cit.*, p. 9.
79. *op. cit.*, p. 36.
80. *op. cit.*, p. 36–37.
81. *op. cit.*, p. 71.
82. *op. cit.*, p. 37.
83. *op. cit.*, p. 38.
84. *op. cit.*, p. 38–39.
85. *op. cit.*, p. 110.
86. *op. cit.*, 110–114.
87. Torner, *op. cit.*, 14.
88. Torner, *op. cit.* p. 15.
89. This is presumably a reference to the fact that *Nueva Filosofía* contains several titles.
90. These documents were originally uncovered by D.J. Marco Hidalgo, “Doña Oliva Sabuco no fue escritora,” *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos*: VII, 1 (July, 1903).
91. Jose Luis Abellan, *Historia Crítica del Pensamiento Español*, Madrid: Espasca-Calpe (1979), p. 215.
92. *Vera Medicina*, *op. cit.*, p. 255–256.
93. In *Obras*, *op. cit.*, xxvi.

12. Marie le Jars de Gournay

BEATRICE H. ZEDLER

Marie de Gournay is remembered as “the adopted daughter of Montaigne” and as the editor of his essays, but she was also a novelist, translator, poet, literary critic, and essayist in her own right. She lived during the reigns of five French kings: Charles IX, Henri III, Henri IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. Her life was affected by the troubles, interests, and attitudes of her times. To her contemporaries she was both an object of ridicule and an object of praise. Some regarded her as an eccentric old woman who dwelt only in the past. Others who admired her goodness, wit, and intelligence, regarded her as “the tenth Muse” or “the French Minerva.” Among her friends and admirers were not only Montaigne, but also Justus Lipsius, Saint Francis de Sales, La Mothe le Vayer, Abbé de Marolles, and Cardinal Richelieu.

We shall look first at her life and then at her scholarly achievements.

I. BIOGRAPHY

Marie le Jars de Gournay was born on October 6, 1565, in Paris. Both of her parents, Jeanne de Hacqueville and Guillaume le Jars, came from noble families. Her father had a promising career at the court of King Charles IX. He owned a house in Paris and in 1568 purchased the feudal rights to the castle and country estate of Gournay-sur-Aronde. This gave him the right to the title of Seigneur de Gournay. Though Marie was to refer to herself in different ways, for example: La Dame de Gournay, Marie de Jars, and Marie

de Gournay de Jars, she is most often referred to as Marie de Gournay, after the title that her father had acquired.¹

Marie was the oldest of six children. She had three sisters and two brothers. The year that the sixth child was born, 1577, her father suddenly died, leaving his widow to look after the family. Since Madame le Jars could no longer afford to remain in Paris, she moved her family to the estate at Gournay in Picardy.

As a young girl, Marie showed more interest in the life of study than in the household arts she was expected to learn. She could not share her mother's traditional view of the role of women. In the brief autobiography in which Marie tells of her first thirty years, she says that every hour that she could steal from other tasks she spent in study. She taught herself Latin by comparing Latin texts with their French translations, but found Greek more difficult to learn.²

One of the most important events of her early life was her reading of a book of essays by Michel de Montaigne. She was so greatly impressed by this work that she wanted more than anything else to meet its author. Her wish was fulfilled in 1588 when she went to Paris with her mother and learned that Montaigne was also in Paris. She wrote him a letter expressing her admiration for his work, and the very next day he came to see her. A friendship developed between the older writer, who was then fifty-five, and his young admirer, who was twenty-three. He offered her the title of "fille d'alliance," his "adopted daughter," a title that she proudly accepted. She, in turn, referred to him as her second father. In the months that followed they met often in Paris, and later he visited Marie and her mother at their home in Picardy for about three months.

In 1591 her mother died, leaving Marie with new responsibilities. As the oldest child she had to make arrangements for the rest of the family. When the estate was settled, Marie chose to live in Paris independently and alone, that is, except for her servant, Nicole Jamyn, and her cat, Piaillon. To provide generously for her brothers and sisters, she had reduced her own portion of the estate and, as a result, was to suffer from poverty.

In September of 1592 Montaigne died. Marie did not learn of his death until eight months later. She felt desolate at the loss of her second father, but at the request of Madame de Montaigne she helped to prepare a new edition of Montaigne's essays and saw that

it was published. The result of her work was the 1595 edition of the *Essays*.

Marie also accepted an invitation to visit Madame de Montaigne in her home in Périgord, near Bordeaux. She was welcomed as a member of the family and spent fifteen months with them. She later visited the Netherlands where she was well received, as the result of the influence of Justus Lipsius, Montaigne's friend and admirer, who also admired Marie.

Back in Paris, she tried to cultivate influential people and, as she says, "by entertaining, become known to those who come near their Majesties, so that they might bear witness that I deserved worthily to be supported by them."³ She felt that she was worthy of a royal pension, but to have a chance of obtaining it, she had to live in a manner suitable to a lady of quality. She was criticized by her contemporaries for spending her small inheritance foolishly, on a horse and carriage, two lackeys, two maids, expensive food and furnishings, and materials to pursue an interest in alchemy. She answered by saying that her expenses for lodging, food, and furniture had always been those of a frugal housewife, that a lady of her rank needed a carriage because of the dirt and length of the Paris streets, that she needed the lackeys to care for the horse and carriage, and that for just eight months she had a second maid who taught her to play the lute and thus help banish her sadness. She admits that she did spend some money on experiments in alchemy, but did not foolishly expect a sea of gold. She defends her interest as a natural and wholesome scientific curiosity.⁴

Marie did receive a pension from Queen Marguerite of Valois, a protector of arts and letters to whom Montaigne had dedicated his *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*. At her court Marie met the Duc de Nevers who arranged for her to be presented to King Henri IV. The king raised her hopes for royal benefits by inviting her to appear often at court, but a month later, in 1610, the king was assassinated. Some blamed the Jesuits for the crime because the assassin, Ravaillac, was said to have been influenced by a Jesuit's theories. Father Coton, the king's Jesuit confessor, publicly deplored the king's murder, but an anonymous pamphlet, *Anti-Coton*, not only accused the Jesuits of directly intending to kill the king, but also implicated Father Coton in the plot.

Marie's reaction was to write a treatise in which she lamented the death of the king and defended the Jesuits against calumny and unjust accusations. But at this time of religious tension in France, Marie herself was attacked in a pamphlet entitled *Anti-Gournay*. Her good name was slandered and she took the case to court to have the libellous pamphlet banned, but with little result. Not only was she hurt by this defamation of character, but she worried that it would ruin her chances for royal financial support.⁵ One of the worst effects of the episode was that from this time on she was viewed as fair game by tormentors and practical jokers.

According to one well-authenticated story, three young men led her to believe that King James I of England had requested her biography to include in a collection of famous men and women. She worked on this for six weeks and later discovered that the English king had never made such a request and that her biography was being circulated in an altered form which was detrimental to her reputation. She later published the original autobiography in the 1641 edition of her collected works.⁶

Another less cruel joke is recorded in the story of the "three Racans." After Marie had moved to a modest attic apartment in the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, she sent a copy of her collected works to a poet, Racan, whom she admired but never had met. Racan planned to visit Marie to thank her for the book, but two young men, de Bueil and Yvrande, happened to hear of the day and the hour of Racan's proposed visit. A little before the appointed time, de Bueil went to the apartment, announced that he was Racan, and was graciously received by Marie. Shortly after he had left, Yvrande arrived and insisted that he was Racan and made her believe that her first visitor had been an impostor. Soon after Yvrande had left, the real Racan, an older man, painfully climbed up the narrow stairs which had only a rope instead of a railing, and nearly out of breath, said he had come to thank her for the gift of her book. Having been fooled before, Marie not only refused to believe him but chased him out by hurling her slipper at him. When she later learned the truth, she visited him to explain what had happened and thereafter they became good friends. Boisrobert wrote a comedy in verse about this incident, entitled *Les Trois Orontes* (1653).⁷

Boisrobert also presented Marie to Cardinal Richelieu who greeted her in a way that was intended to make fun of her, but she

answered graciously, "Laugh, great genius, laugh on – since you should have some amusement." Richelieu then apologized for his greeting and offered to give her a modest pension. To this, at the prompting of Boisrobert, he added a little more for her servant, Jamyn, and her cat, Piaillon.⁸

Marie was criticized by her contemporaries not only for some of her ideas but also because she was old, poor, plain-looking, and single. They did not understand her choice "to have no other husband than her honor, enriched by the reading of good books."⁹

During her last years when she lived in the Rue St. Honoré, opposite the Church of the Fathers of the Oratory, her home became a meeting place for some of the most eminent writers and scholars of her time, including La Mothe le Vayer, Claude de l'Étoile, Abbé de Marolles, and Guillaume Colletet. Some scholars have thought that the idea of the French Academy was conceived in Marie's salon and that some of its early meetings were held there. She also attended the salons of others, such as those of the Duchess de Longueville and of the Comtesse de Soissons,¹⁰ and she corresponded with many eminent persons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Montaigne, Cardinal Richelieu, Cardinal du Peron, Madame de Loges, Guez de Balzac, the Du Puy brothers, Justus Lipsius.¹¹

Marie died on July 13, 1645 at the age of seventy-nine, after receiving the last sacraments of the Church. Her funeral was held the next day at the Church of St. Eustache. Among the epitaphs written by her friends was one by La Mothe le Vayer, who referred to her as "another Pallas whom an extraordinary Father has produced here below." He added that she "loved virtue" and "amassed a great store of the riches of the soul."¹²

As we turn to a more direct consideration of her achievements, we should note that Marie de Gournay had a wide range of intellectual interests. Since she did not explicitly differentiate between her non-philosophical and philosophical interests, we need to remember that, for her, literature and philosophy were not two separate or mutually exclusive areas. But for the purposes of our study we shall look first at the writings that are most closely connected with literature and then at those that have a predominantly philosophical dimension.

II. LITERARY WORKS

Marie de Gournay was a novelist, translator, poet, and literary critic. Her first published work was a novel. Its title, *Le Proumenoir de M. de Montaigne*, gives no clue to its contents but suggests the walks that Marie and Montaigne took at Gournay when Montaigne visited there in 1588. At that time they read together Plutarch's *Accidents of Love*, and one of Plutarch's stories recalled to Marie a story she had read earlier. She told a version of this story to Montaigne and later developed it into her novel.

The story is about a Persian princess, Alinda, who is to be married against her will to the king of Antioch. On the journey to Antioch where the marriage is to take place, she meets and falls in love with a young man, Léontin. They run away together but are shipwrecked on the shores of Thrace, where a nobleman, Orthalcus, falls in love with Alinda, and his sister, Orthalde, falls in love with Léontin. When Léontin learns that Orthalcus loves Alinda, he is willing to give her to him in exchange for Orthalde. Alinda learns of this betrayal, pretends to accept Orthalcus, and asks that he arrange for the murder of an old servant who has maligned her. After writing a farewell letter to Léontin, Alinda takes the servant's place and is murdered in her stead. When Léontin receives her letter and learns that she died because of his betrayal, he takes his own life.¹³

The book has been called one of the first psychological novels to be written in France. Marie is less interested in the external events of the plot than in the psychological and ethical problems they pose for the characters. She includes long digressions which seem as important to her as the story. While sympathizing with a woman who resists a marriage of convenience and while appreciating Alinda's steadfast devotion to Léontin, Marie makes it clear that she is not condoning extramarital affairs. Alinda, after all, came to a sad end. Marie uses the plot to comment on more general themes. She suggests, for example, that women need to be educated. Contrary to men's belief that knowledge kindles wantonness in women, her view is that knowledge is a basis for virtue. "Are men afraid," she wonders, "that if women studied, ancient philosophy would make them believe that continence is not commanded by reason, but only

by civil law?" Marie thinks that women still would be continent to be mistress of their own souls.¹⁴

The *Proumenoir*, which was first published in 1594, became so popular that it was re-published in 1595, 1598, 1607, 1626, 1634, and 1641, but the editions are not identical since Marie made some changes before each new edition. The novel also served as the basis for La Mesnardière's play, *Alinde*.¹⁵

The 1594 edition of the *Proumenoir* also contained a translation of Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*. This was reprinted in 1626 and 1636 in *L'Ombre de la Damoiselle de Gournay*, along with a translation of parts of Book I and Book IV, and translations from Tacitus, Sallust, Ovid, Cicero, and from the Latin Missal. All of the translations of the Roman classics were reprinted, along with a translation of Book VI of the *Aeneid* in 1634 and 1641 in *Les Advis ou Les Presens de la Demoiselle de Gournay*.¹⁶

The work of translation was highly esteemed in the sixteenth century, though less so in the seventeenth century. For Marie, translation was not just a matter of substituting words of one language for those of another. She thought that judgment is no less involved in the work of translation than in original creation and stressed that the translator must be faithful to the text, yet also use grace and skill. Marie suggested that the French kings should offer prizes for translations of the best Latin poets.¹⁷ Her translations into French verse of Virgil's description of the sack of Troy, of the serpents sent to strangle Laocoon and his children, and of Dido's despair and death were singled out for special praise. Some think that Marie's translations show more inspiration than her original poems.¹⁸

Marie did not think of herself as primarily a poet. "Poetry is not my target," she said. "I am pursuing something more solid and verses are not my work; they are only my playthings."¹⁹ Yet she included a collection of poetry, "Bouquet poétique," in the first edition of her *Proumenoir*, and this, with some changes and additions, also appeared as "Bouquet de Pinde" in *L'Ombre*.

She tried various kinds of poetic forms: odes, eclogues, sonnets, and especially short epigrams. In her handling of this last form she said that she was following the most judicious Greek and Latin poets rather than trying to sharpen her epigrams with pointed

witticisms according to the current fashion.²⁰ This was the context of another amusing story, since Racan, who had become Marie's friend, frankly told her that her epigrams lacked a sharp point or sting. Marie replied that they were not intended to have a sting since they were Greek epigrams, epigrams "à la grecque." A few days later when they were both guests at a dinner, Marie remarked to Racan that the soup that was served was flat and lacked flavor. Racan replied, "Oh, but it is Greek soup, 'soupe à la grecque.'" ²¹

Some of Marie's poems were addressed to members of the Montaigne family, some to her relatives, to the king and other members of the nobility, to Cardinal Richelieu, and to Joan of Arc.²² One of her poems, "Peinture des Moeurs" is a long self-portrait in which she lists her strengths and weaknesses.²³

Though neither Marie nor her contemporaries regarded her original poetry as a major contribution, her theories about poetry and the French language were often a topic of discussion in her time.

Towards the beginning of the seventeenth century there was a controversy between the followers of Ronsard and the followers of Malherbe over changes in the French language. Marie, who admired Ronsard almost as much as she admired Montaigne, was a lively participant in the controversy and expressed her views in several treatises.²⁴

While recognizing that the development of the French language needed some direction, she disliked the arbitrary rules that Malherbe's supporters were trying to impose. They were against the use of metaphors. They wished to reduce the number of words and banish certain older words from the language. Marie defends metaphor as "the most precious gem in the language of a poem," and notes that God has spoken to us in metaphors. She wanted language to retain both the right to grow and the right to keep old words that are still useful. A word becomes "old" not by the dictate of some individual or group, but only when it ceases to be used.²⁵ These fleecers of language would "strip poetry of its liberty, dignity, richness, and, in a word, of its flower, fruit, and hope."²⁶

Marie did have a preference for the French literature and language of the sixteenth century. This made her appear old-fashioned and behind the times. Her liking for old words made her an object of satire. Gilles Ménage pictures "de Gournay . . . this learned lady in favor of antiquity," appearing before the French Academy to ask

them to retain some of the words they were abolishing, such as *moult*, *ains*, *maint*, *blandice*.²⁷ She also was caricatured in two seventeenth century plays, but “she holds,” as Ilsley remarks, “the unique, if dubious honor of being the only woman on the scene.”²⁸ While some writers have seen her as an antiquated scholar, others have come to recognize the basic soundness of her judgment to save old words that are still useful and add new words as needed.²⁹

Having taken note of Marie’s contributions as a critic of language and literature, as poet, translator, and novelist, we shall now look at the works that have a more directly philosophical focus, specifically her editions of the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne and some of her own essays in the two major collections of her writings: *L’Ombre de la Damoiselle de Gournay* and *Les Advis ou Les Presens de la Demoiselle de Gournay*.

III. PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

1. *Editions of Montaigne’s Essays*

During the last months of his life Montaigne had been revising the 1588 edition of his essays. About a year and a half after his death his widow sent to Marie a package containing the papers she would need to complete the work of preparing that new edition. The papers had already been gathered by Pierre de Brach, a friend of the Montaigne family.

There are different opinions on exactly how much work de Brach did and which papers he gathered. Some think that de Brach did the editing and Marie did the proofreading and saw the manuscript through the press. But this would not explain her comments on the unusual difficulties she encountered as editor.

There are also different opinions about what materials she worked with and how they are related to the famous and still extant Bordeaux Copy of the 1588 edition with Montaigne’s revisions written in the margins and on loose slips of paper. Did Pierre de Brach simply transcribe those additions and changes on a second copy (now lost) and was this the text from which Marie worked? Marie’s comments seem to imply this. Though there is no unanimous agreement on the answers to these questions, it is clear that

Marie worked diligently to prepare the new edition. It was published nine months after she had received the package from Madame de Montaigne.³⁰

One writer thinks Marie “was, perhaps, the first woman editor, in an age when editing was a fine art.”³¹ But how faithful an editor was Marie? Some have questioned her work because the Bordeaux Copy, which is surely the one on which Montaigne made revisions, differs in some ways from Marie’s editions. Marie, however, had worked with a different copy, the one that Montaigne’s widow had sent her, believing that “the . . . copy that remains in his house” would attest to the fidelity of her edition.³²

Some critics have gone so far as to imply that Marie herself wrote or embellished the eulogy which appears in Montaigne’s *Essays*, Book II, Chapter 17. In the 1595 edition it reads as follows:

I have taken pleasure in making public in several places the hope I have for Marie de Gournay le Jars, my adopted daughter; and certainly loved by me with more than paternal love, cherished in my retirement and solitude as one of the best parts of my being. There is nothing in this world that I esteem more than her. If youthful promise means anything, this soul will some day be capable of the finest things, among others of the perfection of sacred friendship which we have never heard that her sex has yet attained; the sincerity and firmness of her character are already sufficient for it; her affection for me more than superabundant, and such that it leaves nothing to be desired unless it be that her fear for my end, I being fifty-five years when she met me, would torment her less cruelly. The judgment she made of my *Essays*, she a woman and living in her province, and the extreme eagerness with which she loved me and desired to know me for so long only because of the esteem she had for me before having seen me, is a circumstance very worthy of consideration.³³

Marie shortened this tribute in a later (1635) edition of the *Essays*, but Ilsley has no doubt that the eulogy of Marie is authentic and that she was faithful to the text and the thought of Montaigne.³⁴

As editor, Marie translated into French the Greek, Latin, and Italian quotations included in Montaigne’s *Essays*, and she tried to identify their sources. In addition she wrote a long preface for the

1595 edition in which she examined and answered the criticisms that had been made of the *Essays*.³⁵

Some writers had criticized Montaigne's use of Latin words and new terms, his frankness in speaking of love, his obscurity in some passages, his informal "wandering" style, his seeming lack of soundness in religion, and his preoccupation with describing himself.³⁶ Marie defends him against all of these charges.

On the question of his vocabulary she reminds his critics that many French words have come from Latin and that it is appropriate to seek new terms to express new ideas. On his "anatomizing" of love, she remarks that many ancient writers wrote on this subject and that his frank language was preferable to the indirect insinuations of novelists and poets. On the matter of obscurity she says the book was not meant for apprentices but is "the Koran of the master, the quintessence of philosophy." On his style, she defends "wandering" digression when it enriches the main theme. On religion, she assures the reader of Montaigne's piety; though neither he nor Marie thinks that reason can comprehend God, both accept and adore God by faith.³⁷ And the fact that in the *Essays* Montaigne gives a self-portrait is not a weakness but the strength of his book, the unique characteristic which first impressed her. Speaking of Montaigne, she says:

My father believed that he could teach you nothing better than self-knowledge and practice, now through reason, now through experience. The most instructive advice of all is example, and the finest example in Europe was his life.³⁸

Some of her praise is extravagant, as when she says that no other book written for fourteen or fifteen centuries can be compared in value to the *Essays*. It is not surprising that though she had made some good points in defense of Montaigne, it seemed to some readers that her preface was more subjective and emotional than objective and critical. As a result, in the next five editions (1598, 1600, 1602, 1604, 1611) the long preface was replaced by a short one in which she said:

. . . I retract this Preface which the blindness of my youth and a violent grief tore from my hands when, after the death of the

author, Madame de Montaigne, his wife, had them [the Essays] brought to me to be published, enriched by his last writings.³⁹

In later editions (1617, 1625, 1635) the long preface was again included in a revised form. The 1635 edition was Marie's last edition of Montaigne's *Essays*. It was dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu who supplied the financial assistance for the project.⁴⁰

Marie was sometimes criticized for exploiting the name of Montaigne for her own advantage, and it no doubt helped her to be known as his adopted daughter. But it is also true that she was genuinely devoted to him. As one writer has said, "For more than half a century she fought for the reputation of Montaigne, and did much to establish it."⁴¹

2. *Essays on Morality*

Most of Marie essays are found in her collections of writings: *L'Ombre de la Damoiselle de Gournay* and *Les Advis ou les Presens de la Demoiselle de Gournay*. Marie explained the title of the first work by saying: "L'homme est l'ombre d'un songe, et son oeuvre est son ombre," that is, "Man is the shadow of a dream, and his work is his shadow." She regarded her book as the shadow and image of her mind.⁴² The title of the later collection refers in a more literal way to her advice and presents (or gifts).⁴³

The advice that she freely gives reveals her interest in ethical topics, whether she is talking about man's supreme good and the virtues and vices or even about the education of princes.

In 1600, on the occasion of the marriage of Henri IV and Marie de Medici, Marie offered the royal couple some advice on the education of their future children. She reminded them that "men are not born wise; they become wise through discipline," and she added that "the human soul is well-born in vain unless the sun of discipline comes to shine upon it and makes its goodness appear."⁴⁴ The role of a tutor is very important here. She recalls that Philip of Macedonia rejoiced in having Aristotle as his son's tutor almost as much as he rejoiced in his son's birth. Knowing that her second father had written about the education of children, Marie exclaims, "O that the great Montaigne were still alive to serve for the educa-

tion of these princes!"⁴⁵ She recommends that the tutor should be a wise and virtuous person: a person who judges well, wills well, and acts well. "Knowledge without morals," she says, "cannot bring true honor and profit."⁴⁶

This essay was followed by another, "On the Birth of the Children of France." Here the model proposed to the Dauphin was Titus, whose glory it was to be good.⁴⁷ The stress on goodness recurs in "The Education of the Prince," where after indicating that the student must desire to learn and that subjects studied by the prince must be practical, she says that the prince should be a wise and virtuous man.⁴⁸ Without explicitly teaching that knowing what is right necessarily results in doing what is right, she links knowledge and virtue.⁴⁹

The theme of morality which appears in her educational essays is more directly addressed in some of her other writings. Though Marie has not given a formal systematic treatment of the field of ethics, she raises some ethical questions and frequently speaks of virtues and vices.

She knows the Stoics' view of the sovereign good of all things: to be and to act according to nature. And she seems to share their conviction that "the sovereign good of man consists in the use of right reason, that is to say, it consists in knowledge and in virtue."⁵⁰ She approves Aristotle's saying that what is proper to man is to possess reason, to listen to it, and to exercise it. But then she exclaims:

How far removed man is from himself! There are few men sufficiently provided with reason, that is, with natural good sense. Of this small number only the smallest portion nowadays cares about cultivating it by Letters to enlighten it, which can be called "putting it in possession of itself;" and of this small portion which works to enlighten it, another much smaller portion wishes . . . to make use of it in its conduct . . .⁵¹

She is painfully aware that man, though a reasonable animal whose essential form consists in reason, does not make good use of his reason. Looking pessimistically or perhaps realistically at her own century, she does not find sufficient wisdom or virtue to write about, but says, "with the aid of their contrary qualities we have material

for composing books.”⁵² It is through the negative approach of considering the vices of her age that she conveys her views of what constitutes virtue.

In her essay, “Of the Vicious Virtues,” she raises the question: What makes an act virtuous? Here reason is equivocal or ambiguous since not all acts that we call virtuous are in fact virtuous. She points out that some acts that seem virtuous have vice as their root. It is by intention that acts should be judged.⁵³ She thinks there are very few so-called virtuous acts that are done for no other end than duty. The motive for most apparently good acts is the desire for glory or the concern for reputation or for usefulness. But though stressing the importance of a good intention, she also recognizes that sometimes acts done for a good motive can have a bad result, and thereby implies that results must also be considered. She ends this essay with the pessimistic remark: “. . . whoever would take away from man all the virtues that he practises by compulsion, by interest, by chance, and by inadvertence, would have placed him closer to the beasts than I dare to say.”⁵⁴

Some people live and act in ways that do not even *seem* virtuous. Some have mistaken external riches for real value or noble birth for true nobility. Some of the young noblemen are unaware of the meaning of true valor. It does not mean mere fearlessness or brute strength which is also shared by animals and the enslaved gladiators of ancient Rome. It includes compassion for the weak and *valoir* in the sense of being worthy.⁵⁵

Marie’s essays give the impression that the most prevalent vices of her time were *médiance* (slander), mockery, and calumny. She repeatedly condemns them in a spirited way that reminds her readers that she herself had been the victim of these vices of others. She thinks that the vice of slander is “the worst of the worst of present day vices,” and that as honor is a great good, so mockery is a great evil. She adds that God has given the Devil, his antagonist, the chief enemy of the human race, the title of calumniator. Calumny and slander “bury the living and dig up the dead.”⁵⁶ To Marie, the slanderer who devours a person’s honor is more like a cannibal or man-eater than one who devours only the body.⁵⁷ Speaking in a personal way, Marie called slander the wrong which “more than any other is bitter to my heart.”⁵⁸

In another essay she raises the question whether vengeance is

licit. She concludes that in some cases of serious offenses vengeance is not only legitimate but necessary to deter the wicked and safeguard the laws of eternal justice.⁵⁹

In the same essay she reminds her readers that "God gave us reason as a touchstone and beacon in this life," and elsewhere she spells out more positively what is meant by virtuous conduct, that is, conduct according to reason, saying: "... the use of reason in what regards conduct consists in two main points: not to offend anyone and to do good to whom one can . . ." ⁶⁰

The importance of kindness is reiterated in "Des fausses dévotions," where she says, "No one can say that he loves God if he disregards one of his main commandments, which consists in charity towards our fellow man."⁶¹ As slander and calumny are the worst of vices, so their opposite, charity, is queen of the virtues.

Marie disagreed with the writer who said of a man that "his mind had less goodness than greatness." Since she thought there could be no greatness without goodness, her comment was: "The man is good or he is not great."⁶²

3. *Feminist Essays*

Marie's essays on women can be seen as an extension of her interest in ethics. Uncharitableness and injustice of any kind deeply disturbed her, and she was well aware of the injustice women had suffered.

Though one writer has referred to her as "the mother of modern feminism," she was by no means the first to write in defense of women.⁶³ In the thirteenth century Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, the two authors of the *Roman de la Rose*, had initiated the "querelle des femmes" in France by taking opposite views. Later, Christine de Pisan, Jean Gerson, André Tiraqueau, Antoine Héroët, and François Rabelais contributed to the discussion. But it may be true, as two recent writers have said, that Marie de Gournay was "the first great feminist of the seventeenth century."⁶⁴

Her interest in the role of women arose from the frustrations of her own experience: first from her mother's opposition to her desire for an education, and later from the attitude that some of her male contemporaries had towards her work as a scholar.

In *Égalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622) Marie begins by noting that most of those who have taken up the cause of women have tried to show that women are superior to men, but she says that she herself, avoiding both extremes, is content to show that they are equal to men. She speaks ironically of those men who regard women as inferior, saying that such men must be “braver than Hercules who only defeated twelve monsters in twelve combats, while these (modern men) with a single word defeat half the world.”⁶⁵

Marie proposes to present her views on the dignity and ability of women by appealing to the authority of the philosophers, of Fathers of the Church, and of Scripture. Socrates and Plato gave women the same rights and functions as men in their Republic and maintained that women often surpass men in perfection and virtue. Besides, these two philosophers thought they added luster to their discourse by speaking through the mouths of Diotima and Aspasia.⁶⁶

She asks: “Is there any more difference between men and women than between women and other women according to the education they have received, according to whether they were raised in a city or village, or according to the country in which they lived?”⁶⁷ She seems to be saying that it is not a person’s sex but education and environment that can explain the differences in the attainment of excellence.

She cites Plutarch, Seneca, Antisthenes, and others in support of her view that the virtue of man and of woman is the same.⁶⁸

Using a philosophical argument, she says:

... the human animal is neither man nor woman, to put it exactly, the sexes being made not simply but *secundum quid*, as they say in the School; that is to say: only for propagation. The unique form and difference of this animal consists only in the human soul.⁶⁹

She is saying that the essence of a human being does not include sexual differentiation. Being male or female is accidental to the nature of a human person. The only purpose of sexual differentiation is propagation. It is the human soul, not being born male or female that constitutes our essential characteristic as a human

being. Then, thinking of her cats, she adds a little joke that helps to make her point: "There is nothing that so resembles a male cat on a windowsill as a female cat."⁷⁰

Turning to Scripture and the Church Fathers, she reminds her readers that "Man was created male and female," that St. Basil had stressed the sameness of nature in man and woman, and that the reason St. Paul commanded women to keep silence in church was not through disdain, but only through fear that if they preached, their grace and beauty would be distracting. Other ancient nations allowed women as well as men into the priesthood. Christians have allowed women to baptize in case of necessity. The reason for forbidding them to dispense the other sacraments must be, she thinks, to maintain the authority of men. But, in Marie's opinion, Jerome wrote wisely when he said that in the matter of the service of God, it is not a person's sex, but the person's spirit and doctrine that should be considered. She cites the examples of Joan of Arc, Mary Magdalene, and the women to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection. And if men should boast that Jesus Christ was born of their sex, it was because he could not without scandal have mingled at all hours of the day and night with the crowds, to convert, help, and save the human race if he had been a woman.⁷¹ But, she says, "If any one . . . imagines God to be either masculine or feminine . . . , he shows himself to be as bad a philosopher as a theologian."⁷² Finally, if Scripture has declared the husband the head of the wife (*chef de la femme*), it would be the greatest foolishness for man to take this literally, for God has said of husband and wife that the two will be only one. According to Scripture, woman, too, is found worthy of being made to the image of the Creator and of enjoying the mysteries of the Redemption and of Paradise.⁷³

Four years later, in *Grief des dames* (1626) Marie expresses her anger, often in a satirical style, at the way women have been treated by courtiers and some men of letters. In this treatise, she begins by exclaiming:

Blessed are you, O reader, if you are not of this sex to whom all good things have been forbidden in forbidding liberty to it . . . so that what constitutes its only happiness and its only sovereign virtue is to be ignorant, to be foolish, and to serve.⁷⁴

The grievance that Marie is protesting is that men refuse to enter

into serious conversation with women or take seriously anything that women have written. "Even though women had the powerful arguments of a Carneades," she says, "there would be some worthless man who would put them down with the approval of those present, when with just a smile or some little shaking of his head, his mute eloquence would say: 'It is a woman who speaks.'"⁷⁵ To avoid serious discussion and avoid being beaten by a woman, men resort to various tricks, such as turning the discourse into a joke or into a volley of perpetual gossip or changing the subject or pedantically spitting out some fine things that no one asked them about, believing that they can dazzle their antagonist simply by the lightning-flashes of their knowledge. Unfortunately, a person who "says thirty foolish things will nevertheless carry off the prize, because of his beard."⁷⁶

Marie adds some critical words about those men who absolutely despise the works of women without even deigning to read those works to see what they are like. She concludes by reminding such men that ignorance is the mother of presumption.⁷⁷

Marie may not have changed the attitude of the men whom she criticized, but she did influence a seventeenth century woman writer. In the 1634 and 1641 editions of *Égalité*, Marie had included the name of "the Dutch Minerva," Anna-Maria van Schurman, on a list of famous learned women. She referred to her as one who is "the rival of these illustrious women in eloquence and . . . - possesses the ancient and modern languages and all the liberal and noble Arts."⁷⁸

Anna-Maria van Schurman in turn expressed her appreciation to Marie, saying in a dedication: "Thanks to the heroine de Gournay of the great and noble mind, strongly defending the cause of our sex," and she added in a poem: "It is fitting that you plead the cause of our innocent sex . . . Go forward, O glory of Gournay! We shall follow your banners."⁷⁹

Anna-Maria kept her word in *Question célèbre: S'il est nécessaire ou non, que les filles soient savantes*. In this treatise, published a year after Marie de Gournay's death, Anna-Maria supported the position that a woman not only can but should be a scholar.

IV. CONCLUSION

To some of her contemporaries Marie seemed to be a bizarre figure, *arriérée et attardée* (backward-looking and behind the times): a Donna Quixote fighting for lost causes.⁸⁰ But clearly this does not do her justice. In some respects she was forward-looking and ahead of her time: in writing the first French psychological novel; in giving views on the use of old and new words that were later acknowledged to be sound; in the initiative she showed in editing, publishing, and defending the *Essays* of Montaigne; in arguing for kindness and charity in human relations; and in promoting the education of women and insisting that they be treated as equals.

We have seen that she had many intellectual interests, but as a philosopher she is likely to be remembered mainly as a feminist, as a moralist, and as the editor and defender of Montaigne's *Essays*. In the writings that have a philosophical focus she does not always use the formal, organized, objective style that one sometimes expects of a philosophical discourse. Her treatment often seems informal, rambling, subjective, and personal. There are some good reasons for this. As a self-taught scholar, she had not gone through the discipline of a formal education with its stress on logical structure. She was also a sensitive woman who had been hurt by the jokes, pranks, and ridicule that had been directed against her, and some of her writing reflects her personal pain. In addition, she took as her model Montaigne whose style was informal and "wandering" and who openly declared: "It is myself that I portray . . . I am myself the matter of my book."⁸¹

Historians always refer to Marie de Gournay as "la fille d'alliance de Montaigne," and that would please her, for she once wrote: "I adorn myself with the beautiful title of this alliance since I have no other ornament."⁸² But despite her modest remark, we should also remember Marie as an independent woman who believed that "to live is to think."⁸³

NOTES

1. Marjorie Henry Ilsley, *A Daughter of the Renaissance: Marie le Jars de Gournay: Her Life and Works* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963), p. 11, note*.

This book is the best available source of information on de Gournay's life and works.

2. Marie de Gournay, "Apologie pour celle qui escrit," in *L'Ombre de la Demoiselle de Gournay* (Paris: Jean Libert, 1626), pp. 729–787, and in *Les Advis ou Les Presens de la Demoiselle de Gournay* (Paris: Toussaint Du-Bray, 1634), pp. 494–535. See also Ilsley, *op. cit.*, entire book; Hervé de Broc, *Les Femmes auteurs* (Paris: 1911), pp. 121–133; F. Desplantes-P. Pouthier, *Les Femmes de lettres en France* (Geneva: Slatkine reprint of 1890 Rouen edition, 1970), pp. 35–52; M. Léon Feugère, *Les Femmes poètes au XVI^e siècle*. Étude suivie de: Mlle de Gournay (Paris: Didier, 1860), pp. 127–232; Mario Schiff, *La Fille d'alliance de Montaigne: Marie de Gournay* (Paris: H. Champion, 1910), pp. 1–45; Edith Sichel, *Michel de Montaigne* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1911), pp. 125–141.
3. "Apologie," *Advis* (1634), p. 525; Ilsley, p. 87.
4. "Apologie," *Advis*, pp. 511–512; Ilsley, p. 88; Marie de Gournay, "Peinture des Mœurs," reprinted in Mario Schiff, *op. cit.*, p. 112, lines 94–98.
5. Ilsley, pp. 97–119.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 126–127; Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. Antoine Adam (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), vol. I, pp. 379–380; Paul de Musset, *Extravagants et Originaux du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Charpentier, 1863), pp. 162–164; Ch.-L. Livet, *Précieux et précieuses: caractères et mœurs littéraires du XVII^e siècle* (Leipzig, Paris: Welter 1897), pp. 287–288.
7. Tallemant des Réaux, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 382–384; Gilles Ménage, *Menagiana* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Delaulne, 1729), vol. III, pp. 83–85; Desplantes-Pouthier, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–42; Feugère, *op. cit.*, pp. 147–151.
8. Tallemant des Réaux, vol. I, p. 380; de Musset, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–176; Livet, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–287; Feugère, pp. 162–163. Marie also had two other cats, Minette and Donzelle.
9. Broc, *op. cit.*, p. 128; Ilsley, p. 85.
10. *Les mémoires de Michel de Marolles, Abbé de Villeloin* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1656), p. 58.
11. Marie left her vast correspondence together with her other papers and books to La Mothe le Vayer. He showed her collection of letters to some of his friends, but it disappeared after his death. See Schiff, pp. 46–47; Ilsley, pp. 263–264.
12. Livet, p. 293; Ilsley, pp. 264, 296–298.
13. *Le Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne*, in *Advis* (1634), pp. 452–494, and in *L'Ombre* (1626), pp. 659–729. See also Feugère, pp. 134–139; Ilsley, pp. 48–60.
14. See texts quoted in Ilsley, pp. 56–58.
15. Ilsley, p. 60; p. 285, Appendix II.
16. Ilsley, pp. 33, 282, 290, 300.
17. Ilsley, pp. 192–193; Feugère, pp. 200–203.
18. Feugère, pp. 204–209; Ilsley, pp. 194–199.
19. Quoted from a letter of 1593 in Ilsley, p. 184.
20. Ilsley, pp. 187–188.

21. *Ménage*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 344; Desplantes, p. 51; Feugère, p. 210.
22. Ilsley, pp. 185–191, 283–284, 292–293; Feugère, pp. 210–218.
23. “Peinture des Mœurs,” reprinted in Schiff, pp. 109–113. In this poem of 164 lines Marie de Gournay says she has a temper, does not easily forget an injury, is impatient, thinks her spirit is too cold in the service of God but honors God with a holy respect, embraces the laws of fairness, loves glory a little, does not sow discord, dislikes the sham and tinsel of the court, helps the poor and afflicted, has a noble and honest heart, hates all pretence, is peaceable, thinks that the faults that she has hurt only herself.
24. These treatises include the following: *Sur la version des Poètes ou des Métaphores*, *Des Rymes*, *Des diminutifs français*, *Déffence de la Poésie et du langage des Poètes*, *Lettre sur l’art de traduire les Orateurs*, *De la façon d’écrire de Messieurs du Perron et Bertault, qui sert d’avertissement sur les Poésies de ce volume*, *Du langage François*. All are included both in *L’Ombre* and *Advis*. Ilsley says of de Gournay (p. 131): “She is the only woman of her time who has left an analytical and critical work on the French language.”
25. Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Colin, 1930), vol. III, pp. 96–97; Ilsley, pp. 153–159; Feugère, pp. 187–198; Schiff, pp. 25–28, 37–39, 45.
26. Quoted in W.A. Nitze and A.P. Dargan, *A History of French Literature* (New York, Henry Holt, 1930), p. 217.
27. *Ménage*, vol. IV, p. 259; Feugère, pp. 221–224.
28. Ilsley, pp. 236–241. The plays in which Marie de Gournay was caricatured were *La Furieuse Monomachie* or *Le Cartel* by Gaillard and Braquemart and *Comédie des Académistes* by several authors.
29. Alan M. Boase, *The Fortunes of Montaigne* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 73; Feugère, p. 198; Schiff, pp. 45–46.
30. See Feugère, pp. 141–145; Donald M. Frame, *Montaigne: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), pp. 289, 308–310; Ilsley, pp. 44–47; Jean Plattard, *Montaigne et sons temps* (Paris: Boivin, no date), pp. 280–282; Fortunat Strowski, *Montaigne* (New York: Burt Franklin reprint of 1931 edition, 1971), pp. 39–41; B. St. John, “Montaigne the Essayist: A Biography,” in *The Works of Michael de Montaigne*, ed. by W. Hazlitt (New York Derby & Sons, 1859), vol. III, p. 475 & vol. IV, pp. 178–180.
31. Sichel, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
32. Frame, *op. cit.*, pp. 308–309; B. St. John, *op. cit.*, in Hazlitt ed., *The Works of Michael de Montaigne*, vol. IV, pp. 178–179.
33. *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, tr. by Donald M. Frame (Stanford, Cal.: University Press, 1958), Book II, Chapter 17, p. 502; Ilsley, pp. 29–30.
34. Ilsley, pp. 29, 46. See also Frame, *Montaigne: A Biography*, pp. 278–279; Schiff, pp. 11–14.
35. Feugère, p. 145; Ilsley, p. 62.
36. Boase, *op. cit.*, p. 59; Frame, *Montaigne: A Biography*, p. 311; Ilsley, p. 64.
37. Boase, pp. 59–61; Ilsley, pp. 64–69.
38. Quoted in Ilsley, p. 69; Boase, p. 61.
39. Ilsley, pp. 61–63.

40. See the list of Marie de Gournay's editions of Montaigne's *Essays* in Ilsley, p. 304, and also in "A Bibliographical Notice of the Editions of Montaigne's *Essays*," in *The Works of Michael de Montaigne*, ed. W. Hazlitt, vol. III, pp. 471–496.
41. B. St. John, *op. cit.*, in Hazlitt ed., *The Works of Michael de Montaigne*, vol. IV, p. 179.
42. M. de Gournay, "Advis au lecteur," in *L'Ombre de la Damoiselle de Gournay* (1626), p. iii.
43. Schiff, p. 104.
44. M. de Gournay, "De l'éducation des Enfants de France," in *L'Ombre* (1626), pp. 1, 5.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 26.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 8; Ilsley, pp. 93–94.
47. M. de Gournay, "Naissance des Enfants de France," in *L'Ombre* (1626), pp. 44–61; Feugère, pp. 170–171.
48. M. de Gournay, "Institution du Prince," in *L'Ombre* (1626), pp. 119–185; Ilsley, pp. 103–104.
49. In the 1595 preface to Montaigne's *Essays* Marie had already said: "I am on the side of those who believe that vice comes from stupidity and consequently that the nearer one draws to wisdom, the farther one gets from vice." Quoted in Ilsley, p. 67; Boase, p. 66.
50. M. de Gournay, "Apologie pour celle qui escrit," in *L'Ombre* (1626), p. 778.
51. M. de Gournay, "De L'Impertinente Amitié," in *L'Ombre* (1626), p. 518.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 418, 525.
53. M. de Gournay, "Des Vertus vicieuses," in *L'Ombre* (1626), p. 477.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 477, 487. See also Boase, pp. 69–70; Ilsley, pp. 173–174.
55. From M. de Gournay's "De la Néantise de la Commune Vaillance de ce temps," in Ilsley, pp. 178–179. See also the reference to de Gournay's "Des Grimaces mondaines" in Feugère, p. 183. In "Advis à quelques Gens d'Église," in *L'Ombre* (1626), pp. 346–371, Marie is also critical of the clergy for not preventing the abuse of the sacrament of Confession. She regrets that instead of trying to reform his life, the penitent too often thinks he is free to repeat his sin, in the expectation of being pardoned again.
56. M. de Gournay, "De la médiance," in *L'Ombre* (1626), pp. 199, 229.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
58. "Peinture des Moeurs," in Schiff, p. 113, line 129.
59. M. de Gournay, "Si la vengeance est licite," in *Advis* (1634), pp. 134–137.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 134; and "L'Impertinente Amitié," in *L'Ombre* (1626), p. 525.
61. Quoted in Ilsley, p. 174; Feugère, pp. 172–173. In "Des fausses dévotions," de Gournay also cites St. Francis de Sales, author of *Introduction à la vie dévote*, whom she knew and liked.
62. Feugère, p. 181.
63. M.T. Joran quoted in Schiff, p. 49, note.
64. Maité Albistur & Daniel Armogathe, *Histoire du Feminisme Français du Moyen Âge à Nos Jours* (Paris: Editions des femmes, 1977), p. 122. On pp. 122–

- 123 the authors list 50 seventeenth century works relating to the “querelle des femmes.”
65. M. de Gournay, *Égalité des hommes et des femmes*, in Schiff, pp. 61–62.
 66. *Ibid.*, p. 64. In the second and third editions of this treatise Marie included more examples of famous learned women, among them: Hypatia, Themistoclea, Theano, Damo, Arete, Athenais, and van Schurman.
 67. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
 68. *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.
 69. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
 70. *Ibid.*: “Il n’est rien plus semblable au chat sur une fenêtre, que la chatte.”
 71. *Ibid.*, pp. 70–75.
 72. *Ibid.*, pp. 75–76.
 73. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77.
 74. M. de Gournay, *Grief des dames* (1626), in Schiff, p. 89.
 75. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.
 76. *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.
 77. *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 97.
 78. Schiff, p. 79.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 117; Ilsley, p. 212. In 1668 another woman, Marguerite Buffet, author of *Nouvelles Observations sur la Langue Française*, spoke of Marie de Gournay as one “whose reputation has sparkled throughout all of Europe,” and added, “One can say that this illustrious woman was not ignorant of anything that makes men learned.” See Ilsley, pp. 214–215.
 80. F.J. Hudleston, “Montaigne’s Adopted Daughter,” in *The Living Age*, 6th series. VII (July-August-September, 1895), p. 177.
 81. Montaigne, “To the Reader,” *Complete Essays of Montaigne*, tr. Donald M. Frame, (*ed. cit.*), p. 2.
 82. From the preface to the 1635 edition of Montaigne’s *Essays*, quoted in Grace Norton, *Montaigne: His Personal Relations to Some of His Contemporaries and His Literary Relations to Some Later Writers* (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1908), p. 24.
 83. M. de Gournay, “Des sottises ou presomptives finesses,” in *L’Ombre* (1626), pp. 540–541.

13. Roswitha of Gandersheim, Christine Pisan, Margaret More Roper and Teresa of Avila

MARY ELLEN WAITHE

I. INTRODUCTION

It is appropriate to close this volume with brief descriptions of some learned women of the period who were accomplished scholars. These are women who studied philosophy, and who wrote works of philosophic merit. All deserve greater attention than can be given in this volume and are worthy subjects of further philosophical research. Such a research agenda might include not only those who are discussed below, but also Elisabeth of Schonau, Gertrude the Great, Mechtild of Hackeborn, Gertrude of Hackeborn, Mathilda of Italy, for the study of whose works there presently exists *Istituto di Studi Matildichi*; Marguerite Porete, a beguine mystic, Margery Kempe, contemporary of Julian of Norwich, and who wrote the well-known *Book of Margery Kempe*, Dorotea Bucca, who held a chair in philosophy at Bologna in the 15th century, Marguerite de Navarre, author of *Heptameron* and other works, Novella d'Andrea, known as a legal scholar, Baptista Malatesta, a theologian and philosopher, and Vittoria Colonna, reported to have been a "humanist." Like other women scholars of the period, these women were often "renaissance women" in the colloquial sense of that term. Therefore, their characterizations as "humanist," "legal scholar," "theologian," or even "scholar" might mistakenly create the impression that they were untrained in and either made no contribution to the philosophic dialogue or can make no contribution to our knowledge of the history of philosophy of their time.

II. ROSWITHA OF GANDERSHEIM

Roswitha, (variously spelled Hroswith, Hrotsvitha, Hrotswith) lived *circa* 935–1001. According to Dronke,¹ it is possible that Roswitha spent some of her youth at the court of Otto I, and studied under the scholar Rather of Verona there. Rather was the most widely-read scholar and the best prose-writer of his day, and was invited to Otto's court in 952. Dronke maintains that strong parallels between Rather's distinctive style of rhymed prose and Roswitha's prose suggest that she was at least for some time, a student of his.

And although she had undoubtedly studied literature, especially the Roman classics, and read Greek and Latin, Roswitha's writings also show a solid background in political history, history of religion and history of philosophy. As an example of Roswitha's knowledge of mathematics, and especially of the Pythagorean emphasis on mathematical harmony, Prudence Allen cites the following passage from Roswitha's play *Sapientia*²:

SAPIENTIA: Every number is said to be "diminished" the parts of which when added together give a sum which is less than the number of which they are parts. Such a number is 8. For the half of 8 is 4, the quarter of 8 is 2, and the eighth of 8 is 1; and these added together give 7. It is the same with 10. Its half is 5, its fifth part 2, its tenth part 1, and these together give 8.

On the other hand, a number is said to be "augmented" when its parts added together exceed it. Such for instance is 12. Its half is 6, its third is 4, its fourth is 3, its sixth 2, its twelfth 1, and the sum of these figures is 16. And in accordance with the principle which decrees that between all excesses shall rule the exquisite proportion of the mean, that number is called "perfect," the sum of the parts of which is equal to its whole. Such a number is 6, whose parts – a third, a half, and a sixth, added together, come to 6. For the same reason, 28, 496, and 8000 are called "perfect."

A Benedictine nun, Roswitha was known primarily as a playwright. Although all of her writings have interesting philosophical elements in them, two of her plays, including *Paphnutius*, (sometimes called *The Conversion of Thais*), and *Sapientia*, (sometimes called *The*

Passion of the Holy Maidens) are expressly about philosophy and extensively employ philosophical argument.

Strong, fearless, wise and virtuous women are the focus of Roswitha's plays, and, Dronke says³,

To carry off the coup she intended, she created her own weapon of literary coquetry. Her shape-shifting, her 'weak little woman' pose, her headily exaggerated modesty-*topoi*, her diminutives, her graceful to-and-from of affirmation and negation can all be seen as in the service of that coquetry: all are witty, skilled means of commanding recognition and respect for her way of looking.

Roswitha was, Dronke reminds us⁴

. . . aware of double standards throughout the world of her experience. First and foremost, a different range of expectations for men and women, and for their capacities. Here her coquetry takes the form of comically stressing women's weakness, never minimizing it, yet always pointing it in such a way as to foil expectations and paradoxically show women's strength.

Dronke's use of the descriptor "coquetry" suggests that Roswitha was flirting with her readers and auditors in a sexual way, rather than using the standard humility *topoi* to exaggerate ironically, and hence deny women's inferiority to men. Prudence Allen recently investigated the philosophical import of Roswitha's writings, particularly her views on the nature of women and sex/gender identity⁵. On Allen's view:

The deliberate devaluation of woman may also be compounded by the high value given to humility within the Benedictine tradition. In this context, the monks and nuns were expected always to consider themselves as the poorest of creatures in comparison with others. For this reason, the actual descriptions of women in Roswitha's writings probably serve as a more accurate indicator of her concept of woman than the remarks she uses to describe herself.

Although availing herself of the requisite humility formulas, Ros-

witha clearly argued that men and women have equal capacities for wisdom and for virtue, and that it was morally wrong not to cultivate those capacities. She wrote⁶

(God) has given me a perspicacious mind, but one that lies fallow and idle when it is not cultivated. That my natural gifts might not be made void by negligence I have been at pains, whenever I have been able to pick up some threads and scraps torn from the old mantle of philosophy, to weave them into the stuff of my own book, in the hope that my lowly ignorant effort may gain more acceptance through the introduction of something of a nobler strain, and that the creator of genius may be honoured since it is generally believed that a woman's intelligence is lower.

III. CHRISTINE PISAN

Popularly known as the first person ever to be self-supporting through writing alone, Christine Pisan was an uncommon scholar and an uncommon woman of the late 14th–early 15th century. Born in Venice in 1365, but raised in France at the court of Charles V (where her father was court astrologer), Christine received an education against the advice of her mother. Christine is a major author of her time, a writer of prose as well as of poetry. She is part of the tradition of allegorical philosophers including Murasaki, Herrad, Mechtild, Hadewych and others. Her most famous work *The Book of the City of Ladies* is in part deliberately modelled on Augustine's *Civitate Dei*, and is in part a response to what Christine saw as the misogynist literature that was popular reading among aristocrats and academics in Europe. *Cité des Dames* constructs a walled city for the protection of women from harm: physical as well as moral. In it, the three virtues, Ladies Reason, Justice and Duty, guide women. *Cité des Dames* differs from other books written for women of that period. Christine's three virtues offer deontological arguments against the oppression of women. But they also offer teleological arguments that the oppression of women is contrary to the goal of improving society itself.

It is moral, rather than religious virtues that Christine recommends. Her book, *Le Livre de Trois Vertus* continues the develop-

ment of *Cité des Dames* in recognizing the social limitations to women's exercise of virtue, Christine exhorted women to make the best of whatever opportunities they could create for themselves. In this work she describes the "virtues" of women whose activities are limited by specific social roles and urges each to work hard in the interests of moral regeneration, and to avoid the kinds of activities that dull their intellect and sap their strength, all to the detriment of the overall goal: improving society. *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, *Cité des Dames*, *Le Livre de Trois Vertus*, *Le Dit de la Rose* and *Dieu de Jehanne d'Arc* are widely considered examples of early feminist writing, and as in direct response to *Le Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun.

It is interesting to see how Christine's writings reflect events in her life. In 1389, when Christine was 25 years old, her husband, Etienne du Castel died suddenly. Her *Cent Ballades*, *Virelays*, *Rondeaux*, a collection of short prose works were likely composed shortly following his death. Many of the ballads reflect that grief. Then followed a decade in which she was the sole support of herself and her children. During this period she simultaneously undertook the composition of numerous works of three types: attacks on misogyny, works of social, moral and political analogy, and a commissioned collection of psalm-allegories. This was followed by a period of eleven years from January of 1414 when she completed *Le Livre de la paix*, to July of 1429, when she wrote *Le Dieu de Jehanne d'Arc*. During this eleven year period Christine apparently wrote nothing. Her last work broke this literary silence with a stunning tribute to Joan of Arc little more than a year before the latter would be burned at the stake as a heretic.

Christine's other writings include works on military ethics *The Book of Feats of Arms and Chivalry*, on an ideal state *Le Livre du Chemin de Long Estude*, on a fair and just monarchy *Le Livre de fais et bonnes meurs du sage Roy Charles V*, on duties derived as a consequence of political status, *Le Livre du corps de police*, on government in the interests of peace *Le livre de la paix*, and on the value of living in the face of suffering, *L'Epistre de la prison de vie humain*. All are widely available in French. Her works represent some of the richest poetry and prose writings of her era, and contain lavish illuminations. Many are rich in philosophic argument and thought, and are representative of the social and political arguments of the end of the feudal period.

IV. MARGARET MORE ROPER

Margaret More b. (*circa* 1506–1544) was an accomplished scholar of many disciplines, including philosophy. Her early education was fostered by her father, Thomas More, who urged his daughters, especially Margaret, the oldest, to study the liberal arts. More took care to have his children tutored in Greek, Latin, music, astronomy, theology, French and other subjects. William Gunnell of Cambridge was Margaret's tutor and, as Moore's letter to Gunnell indicates, had expressed his high opinion of her intellectual abilities to her often absent father⁷

I have said the more, dear Gunnell, on this matter, because of the opinion you express, that the lofty quality of my Margaret's mind should not be depressed.

Writing to Margaret of her decision to study philosophy, More counsels⁸

I am delighted that you have made up your mind to give yourself diligently to philosophy, and to make up by your earnestness in future for what you have lost in the past by neglect. My darling Margaret, indeed I have never found you idling, and your unusual learning in almost every kind of literature shows that you have been making active progress.

When she was 19 years old, Margaret translated Erasmus' treatise on the Pater Noster. By that time, she had earned the respect not only of Erasmus, but of Vives, Stapleton, Vesey and others.

V. TERESA OF AVILA

On March 28, 1515 Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda, was born into a wealthy Castillian merchant family. She received a private early education and in her teens attended a convent school run by Augustinian nuns. She became a Carmelite at age 20, a late age for unmarried women to enter a convent, although married women and widows frequently became nuns in middle age. This Carmelite

convent observed Carmelite rules which had been mitigated by Pope Eugenius IV in 1435. The mitigated rule permitted a life of comparable comfort for the aristocratic women who lived at the convent of the Incarnation. There, nuns were often attended by servants. Twenty years after entering the convent, she established her own convent, and later, additional foundations for women, and, eventually, a Carmelite order for men. She died of uterine cancer in 1582. In 1970 she was declared a Doctor of the Church.

When she was about 40 years old, Teresa underwent a religious transformation as a result of her study of Augustine's *Confessions*. This experience, which she referred to as her "conversion" committed her to intense discipline, prayer, contemplation and meditation. In the face of much ecclesiastical opposition, Teresa and four other nuns obtained permission to establish a convent in Avila under the much stricter original Carmelite rule. Under Teresa's direction, her convent practiced fasting, meditation, silence, and partial cloister. Convinced that the Carmelite life she had established for women would also benefit men in their search for knowledge of God, Teresa began a second campaign, this time to establish a Carmelite order of friars. Juan de Yepes y Alvarez was among the first men to join the foundation for men. Later, he would be known as John of the Cross, one of the greatest mystic philosophers. Although she was a busy administrator, spiritual director and scholarly mentor to her nuns, Teresa wrote extensively. There survives a vast collection of more than 400 letters, poetry, brief treatises, and four major works. Three of these are of epistemological interest: *Life*, *Way of Perfection* and *Interior Castle*.

Throughout her writings, Teresa employs the familiar language of love mysticism seen in works of earlier philosophers including Hadewych, Beatrice and Mechtild, and, in works of her disciple, John of the Cross. In *The Interior Castle*, Teresa makes extensive use of analogies of love, betrothal, and marriage. In *Life* she uses the imagery of a garden which needs weeding, seeding, irrigation and continuous care to bloom extravagantly. In addition to describing the phenomenological characteristics of her mystical experiences, she offers an epistemological account of the roles of sensation and reason in knowledge of God. But it is an epistemology which implies a standard Christian ethic of virtuous living. On her account, existence in unity with God requires knowledge of

God. This knowledge can only be achieved through a progressive program which begins with a life of humility, meditation and exemplary conduct. The next step towards the experience of God is the domination of sensory data so that it does not distract the intellect from its contemplation of God. Then, sensorium must be excluded in order to free the intellect. The blocking out of sensory stimuli permits quiet prayer and meditation, leading to an effortless contemplation. Finally, the soul must transcend reason itself. At this stage, God takes an active role in the coming to know of him. Then ensues a frenzied cessation of perception in which the soul desires only union with God, and in which ordinary forms of understanding, once illuminating, become meaningless and even confusing. This working free of both the senses and the intellect prepares the soul for a state of total passivity and receptiveness in which it attains beatific vision and an uncomprehending certainty of unification with God. Although the soul cannot understand intellectually what has happened in its union with God, the experience of union is so intense that the soul is certain that it has experienced union with God⁹

I have only said what is necessary to explain the kind of vision and favor which God bestows on the soul; but I cannot describe the soul's feelings when the Lord grants it an understanding of His secrets and wonders – a joy so far above all joys attainable on earth that it fills us with a just contempt of the joys of life, all of which are but dung.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The women who are discussed in this volume made contributions of varying importance to the discipline of philosophy. Some may be best characterized as students of philosophy: women knowledgeable in its literature, its subject matter, its ideas and its method. Other women discussed in this volume have made greater contributions to specific specialized areas of philosophy. Their status as philosophers, whatever their other professional affiliations and scholarly achievements may also have been, ought not be denied. It should also be noted that the descriptions of the works of

philosophers included in this volume are neither definitive or complete. Rather, they are offered as samplers and are intended to entice scholars to further research. Similarly, no complete evaluation of these philosophers' contributions to the discipline is possible until their works have been fully translated and assessed by the philosophic community in the light of contributions to philosophy made by their male contemporaries.

NOTES

1. Dronke, Peter. *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 56.
2. Allen, Prudence, *The Concept of Woman*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1985, p. 260.
3. *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
4. *Op. cit.*, p. 73.
5. Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
6. *Op. cit.*, p. 257.
7. Enid M.G. Routh, *Thomas More and his Friends*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1963.
8. *Ibid*, p. 132.
9. E. Allison Peers, ed., tr., *The Complete Works of St Teresa of Jesus*. London: 1946, V. 1, p. 174.

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